





LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
F829fr
v.3

W. H. SMITH & SON'S SUBSCRIPTION LIBRARY,

186, STRAND, LONDON,
AND AT THE RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS.

NOVELS ARE ISSUED TO AND RECEIVED FROM SUBSCRIBERS IN SETS ONLY.

TERMS.

FOR SUBSCRIBERS OBTAINING THEIR BOOKS FROM A COUNTRY BOOKSTALL—

			6 Months.	12 Months.
For ONE Volume at a time	£0 12 0	..	1 1 0	
<i>(Novels in more than One Volume are not available for this class of Subscription.)</i>				
For TWO Volumes	0 17 6	..	1 11 6	
<i>(Novels in more than Two Volumes are not available for this class of Subscription.)</i>				
For THREE Volumes	1 3 0	..	2 2 0	
For FOUR	1 8 0	..	2 10 0	
For SIX	1 15 0	..	3 3 0	
For TWELVE	3 0 0	..	5 5 0	



H. S. Leeds
18. 7. 35.

FROM MOOR ISLES.

A LOVE STORY.

BY

JESSIE FOTHERGILL,

AUTHOR OF

"THE FIRST VIOLIN," "KITH AND KIN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON :

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1888.

(All rights reserved.)

823
F829 fr
v. 3

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.



PART IV.—(*Continued.*)

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. WHAT WE TALKED OF	3
IV. "WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW IT" ...	27
V. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS	46
VI. GATHERING CLOUDS	65
VII. THE HOLIDAYS AND AFTERWARDS ...	83
VIII. I SPEAK TO PROFESSOR WILLOUGHBY	92
IX. A CORRESPONDENCE	111

PART V.

I. INES WRITES	151
II. COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING ...	176
III. ELISABETH'S MISSION	207
IV. AT THORNTON	230

CHAPTER	PAGE
V. LUCY	249
VI. "THEN GOOD-NIGHT, ALAS!" ...	264
VII. INES WRITES	282
VIII. FROM MOOR ISLES	315

PART IV.

(Continuea.)

FROM MOOR ISLES.



CHAPTER III.

WHAT WE TALKED OF.

I WAS by no means overjoyed at this encounter. Rather would I have met, thus suddenly, either my grandfather himself, or my other cousin, Maud, the young man's sister. The old man, I was sure, hated the sight of me, and the young girl was absolutely indifferent as to whether she ever saw me or heard of me again. Neither of them, I was sure, would have made any effort to break the ice, if I had been reserved or distant with them. This

was a different case altogether. Dimly I felt that Maurice was as pleased to have met me as I was displeased to have met him. Dimly also, and in a vague and formless way, I felt that if I made myself unpleasant to him, that would only be an incentive to him to persevere in his determination to become acquainted with me. I stood and looked at him, without saying a word.

“I think you must remember as much as that—that we have met before,” he said, holding his ground unembarrassed, in spite of my stare and my silence.

“Oh yes, I have not forgotten you,” I admitted; and he looked pleased, which vexed me, and I was almost sorry I had made the admission, though I must either have done so or maintained silence. I tried to rob my reply of any graciousness it might have had, by adding, “It

was so splendid, that musical festival, and so delightful. I remember every incident connected with it."

"With pleasure?" he asked.

"By no means *altogether* with pleasure," I replied emphatically, recollecting all at once several very painful episodes belonging to that time. He evidently took my words to refer to himself and our meeting; he looked very grave, and bowed a little stiffly.

"You certainly did not look as if you found it all so very delightful when I saw you there," he observed.

I did not care to pursue this subject. I introduced another.

"I did not know you visited here," I said.

"I don't—at least, I have never been here before. I came with Frankland, a friend of mine, who brought me. He said he often came here."

“Oh yes, I have seen Mr. Frankland here. He does those lovely water-colour drawings of reeds and rivers.”

“The same,” said Maurice, smiling. At that moment Dr. Barthel suddenly made his appearance again, with a smile on his face, and some pictures in his hand. Whether he saw something unusual in my expression, some change since he had left me, I know not—it is very possible that he did. His eyes rested on me, then on Maurice for a moment; then, with a bow—

“Pardon, *mein Fräulein*, I see you are engaged.”

“No,” I began, but not very energetically. My heart was full of wrath against him for not having returned five minutes sooner. And yet, as I knew full well, had he done so, it would only have put off this interview for a time; it would not have prevented it.

My "no" was so low that he did not hear it, but turned away and went to show his photographs to some one else. Maurice, without any appearance of haste or discomfiture, went on—

"Frankland told me he had met you here—that was one reason why I came, though I was hoping to see you soon, in any case."

"Indeed!" I said haughtily. I could hear the disagreeable inflection in my own voice, but it did not disturb him.

"I am coming to call upon you soon, if you will be so good as to say that I may."

"You must ask Madame Prénat. I do not receive any visitors independently of her."

"I have seen her, and spoken to her, and she was good enough to say I might come."

If he had not spoken with such calm,

convinced assurance that all was right, if there had been a doubt or hesitation in his manner, I might have submitted, and said no more. But something in his tone compelled me to oppose him.

“And Madame Prénat,” I said, and then felt that I had begun a difficult statement, “she knows better than I do who my—who Mr. Arkwright——”

I was surprised to see the effect of my words upon this cool and self-possessed young man. He winced suddenly, as if struck on a sore point. His pale face flushed ; the smile which had been hovering about it disappeared, a look of pride and displeasure replaced it.

“I know Mr. Arkwright,” he said coldly. “Do you suppose I don’t understand all about that? Surely you must remember that he gave me his card that day, at the Festival. I called upon him at his club,

and had lunch with him—I didn't want to," he added, looking vexed at the very recollection of it, "but under the circumstances there was nothing else to be done."

"You perhaps did not think his company good enough for you," I said deliberately, and then, curiosity getting the better of displeasure, I went on—"How long is it since you saw him? Tell me about it."

"Oh, two or three weeks ago."

"And he said——"

"He said he had not the slightest objection to my calling upon you and becoming further acquainted with you, provided——"

"Provided?"

"That my grandfather knew all about it, and approved of it."

"And does he?"

"He does not—yet. I shall tell him—

write to him, that is, to-morrow morning, and say that I met you here, and what Mr. Arkwright and Madame Prénat have said, and what I intend to do."

"And pray, what will he say?" I asked, leaning back in the sofa on which I was seated. He was still standing, looking down upon me, and we were practically alone. I spoke coldly, though I felt anything but cool. It was so obvious (I thought) that Mr. Grey would not approve. In that idea there was a prospect of relief. If Mr. Grey disapproved, perhaps Maurice would not call upon me.

"He—oh, well, I do my own way pretty much," said Maurice, calmly. "He was very stern to his sons, but he is very indulgent to his grandchildren. They say it's a way that grandfathers often have."

"Still you have not told me what he is likely to say," I observed; "but from your

manner I gather that he will say something very disagreeable."

"No, I don't think he will," said Maurice, carelessly; "but if he did, I should not mind it in the least."

"But perhaps I should," I said quietly, though my heart was beating madly.

He looked at me quickly. The spirit moved me to go on, and say all that was in my mind, wise or foolish, dignified or the reverse. It burnt me, and I spoke it out. And let it be understood that though I spoke in my own name, it was not of my own rights or deserts that I was thinking.

"It seems to me," I said, "that you think you have nothing to do but say you are going to call upon me, and that I shall be delighted to receive you, no matter what there may be behind. I almost wonder," I went on, with extreme bitterness, "that you condescended to consult

Mr. Arkwright or to ask his permission. He is kindness itself—he would never do anything to hurt any one's feelings ; but if you suppose that *I* will allow such a thing, knowing—you cannot deny it—that Mr. Grey has as great an objection as ever to his low relations, you are mistaken.”

“Cousin Ines !” His nonchalant attitude changed in a moment ; he bent earnestly forward, and said in low, eager tones, to which I was forced to listen, though I hated it, and which impressed me whether I would or no, “For heaven's sake, don't talk in that way. That is a very great mistake you are making, you don't know how great a mistake. Listen ; I must tell you. Excuse me seating myself beside you, but I don't want any one else to hear. If you knew or had the least idea of what passed between my grandfather and me after we had met you that day at Kirk-

fence, you would understand. He is the proudest man in England, I believe, especially on all personal points, and questions of honour, and the conduct of a gentleman. He had never told us about you—he had buried it away, and trusted, I suppose, to our never meeting. He had to explain it all to me that day ; and to do it must have cost him absolute agony. I hate to think of it ; and yet I shall never forget it. He told me everything. He said that a month after he had let you go, in his enmity to his son's wife, he repented it bitterly ; it had been the false step of his life. If he had had a wife to help him out with it, he would have got you back again. But he was too proud and too miserable.”

“ If you call that pride—— ” I began.

“ It's what people call pride, though it is self-love mostly. That is how he is made. He can't help himself. He said you

would haunt him. I said you ought to be with us; and he said, 'Yes, but it's too late now.' No, he will be glad that I am to see you. It isn't that that will make him angry," Maurice continued, wrinkling his brow and passing his hand over his hair.

"No. What then?" I asked, in a low voice, feeling that I knew well what the answer would be, and feeling at the same time a force of passionate anger, of fierce, increasing indignation and scorn rising quite uncontrollably within me; which feeling at the moment rather exhilarated me, but afterwards, when I looked back upon it, and realized the capacity for evil emotion which I had suddenly discovered within myself, terrified me. "What then?" I repeated.

"The same feeling that made him say to me then, 'Maurice, you will be the head

of our house when I am gone. This is the wrong I've done you. Can you ever forgive me for it, for losing my head, and delivering over your cousin—who ought to have been the same to me as your sister—into the absolute power and control of a man who is in no wise related to us, on whom we have no claim, letting her eat the bread and depend on the bounty of a professional singer?'"

I bent my head, so that he did not see my face, and with the same terrible feelings of passionate, vindictive anger still raging within me, I let him go on, and I heard him, and understood him, though all the time I was saying to myself, in a little inner voice, "Ah, Monsieur Félix, my good, my kind Monsieur Félix, do not be angry that I let him babble on in this way; wait till my turn comes to speak."

“It was a fearful mistake to make,” Maurice went on, in an awestruck kind of voice, “to let Mr. Arkwright, however good his intentions may have been, establish a claim over you, which we cannot dispute if he opposed it, however unfitting we may feel it that you should be in such a position with regard to him.”

He paused, shaking his head, and looked towards the ground.

“Was it? That will do, sir. You have said enough, and more than enough, to make me more thankful than ever that I am his dependent, and not yours and your grandfather’s.”

I felt my face going white. I saw the sudden startled look on his face, and I went on—

“Unfitting that I should be in such a position with regard to him—why un-

fitting? Is it unfitting that one should be bound by ties of gratitude to a person who was kind and generous and self-forgetful, when every one else was the reverse? A professional singer"—I continued—"all I can see about that is, that a professional singer is better than some people who are not professional singers. What do you think I am made of, that you should say such things to me? Do you expect me to agree with you? Why should I? What are you to me, and what is he not to me? I have not the slightest, not the faintest interest in any of your family, as relations, and I know nothing of you in any other capacity. I don't care what you think. I don't care how many mistakes your grandfather may have made. You are all nothing to me. I would rather not know any of you, or have anything to do with you. But I believe what you say, when

you tell me of your meeting with him. I believe it, because that other time he thought proper to introduce me to you. He has given you permission to come and see me. You say he approved of it, and wished it. I told you he would never hurt any one's feelings."

"In that you do not resemble him," said my cousin, in a low voice; but I was far too excited to attend to him.

"For that reason I will receive you, and for no other—simply because he wishes it, and because whatever he does wish is law to me. So you may come and see me, if you still desire it, after this, since he said so. But I know he wouldn't ask me to know people I hated, and if ever I heard you speak his name again in that tone, I should hate you and would never speak to you any more. Do you understand? Why should I want to speak to you? Tell me

that. Why should I want to have anything to do with you ? ”

I looked at him, breathless. Though Maurice was young, he was a good many years older than I. He could command his feelings, to gain his own purposes. He returned my look, and said—

“ Before I answer that question, let me tell you something. The first time I saw you, I thought you had the sweetest face and the gentlest expression I had ever beheld. This evening when I caught sight of you, I still thought the same, but I saw also that you looked proud and reserved. But now, cousin Ines, do you know, I do not think anger and an angry expression suit you. I should hardly know you for the same person whom I saw leaning on Mr. Arkwright’s arm at Kirkfence. And another thing, I do not think you mind at all what you say, to hurt the feelings of

others. I do not think you try in the least to enter into the position of others. If you will kindly try to think, for one moment, of the sort of life in which such people as my sister Maud and myself are brought up, with regard to everything outside their own immediate circle of intimates and equals, and will then recollect that we had grown up almost without knowing of your existence ; that suddenly, we are confronted by you ; you are led up to us—you remember under what circumstances—I refrain from going into details again ; it comes upon us like a thunderclap. I have just sufficient presence of mind left to introduce myself to Mr. Arkwright and ask for an introduction to you. I go back with my grandfather to his hotel, and hear all this story ; my astonished ears can scarcely take it in. I can scarcely grasp the idea of such a mistake having been

made. I have thought constantly since of how I could best show that I could never have approved of such a thing—that I should like us to be on good terms. I have gone so far as to speak very strongly of my grandfather's weakness and wrongness in the matter. I have thought of fifty ways of appealing to you to forgive him his mistake. Don't you think there is something dreadfully hard in your way of visiting his folly upon him, and making it an excuse for hating him? There is such a thing as forgiveness. You do not show any sign of it, I must say."

"I can forgive that, or most other things, I dare say," I replied indifferently. "I do not care enough about what I may have lost by not belonging to you, to trouble myself about that. But what I will not forgive, or even try to forgive, is that you should speak of him with con-

tempt. I—what am I, that such a fuss should be made about me? But he is different. That is what I mean.”

“I meant no contempt. It seems to me that you do not quite understand. But let that pass. I hope never to be so unfortunate as to rouse your anger and enmity in this way again.” (A chilly feeling came creeping over me; I began to feel small. Was this the sole result of madame’s teaching—that I was to be beaten in good temper and polite behaviour by a barbarian like my cousin Maurice Grey?) “I will bear in mind all that you have said. I think I can understand it. I think I can see where you were wounded. And I beg your pardon for having spoken of Mr. Arkwright in that way. It shall not happen again. But the time will come when you will be ready to receive me for my own sake, and not merely on that

account. You say I may call—well, I shall do so. Apart from yourself, it will be a pleasure to me to know Madame Prénat, a lady of whom I have heard much, and for whose ideas I have great admiration. My grandfather and my sister are down in the country. They come up to town only once a year; so they need not offend you. I am conceited enough to believe that in time I may succeed in causing you to think not quite so ill of our family.”

“You can do what you like,” I replied, still darkly. “I have only told you what I thought.”

“And that is always justifiable, under any circumstances, is it not?” he said amiably. “Have you read ‘The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table’?”

“Yes.”

“In that book there is a fine passage about telling disagreeable truths to people.

But he refers to intimate friends. It is one of the truest things ever written, and every one ought to know it by heart. Many a fine friendship has been wrecked on that rock—the irrepressible love of saying ‘what I thought,’ of one of the parties.”

I sighed profoundly. He seemed to me to be a very extraordinary and not altogether satisfactory young man; and I wondered which of us during this controversy had said the more plainly what he or she thought.

At that moment Madame Prénat came up.

“Ah, Mr. Grey, you have found your cousin! Have you arranged anything about coming to see her?”

“Only in a general way,” he said gravely, and as it seemed to me, ironically.

“We must go now, Ines, my child. You

have a busy day before you to-morrow. 'Only in a general way' is not very satisfactory, is it? Therefore, I will be particular instead of general, and say, will you dine with us to-morrow at eight? We shall be alone, and it will give me pleasure to see you."

"I shall be only too delighted," he replied, with a grateful smile and a profound bow.

"That is decided, then. We shall expect you," she said briskly.

I made no remark, as Maurice handed us to our carriage. But I wondered at Madame Prénat. We drove home in silence. She did not ask my opinion as to what she had done, and I did not care to speak of what had passed between my cousin and myself. Indeed, the recollection of it all was not wholly satisfactory to my self-esteem. Had I, in attempting to defend

my adored Monsieur Félix, merely showed myself a scold and an uncharitable person ? Something very like that had been implied in Maurice's words. I was not satisfied with anything. I thought he looked ready to come whenever he was invited ; and I was glad, very glad that my time was so filled up as not to leave much leisure for the entertaining of idle young gentlemen—in such a light did I choose to regard him. As a matter of fact, I did not know whether he was idle or not—why he lived in London, whether he was going in for any profession—in short, I knew nothing of him and, with childish prejudice, wished I had never seen him or any one belonging to him.

CHAPTER IV.

“WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW IT.”

MAURICE came to dine with us ; and soon one part of my speculation was fulfilled. He very seldom failed to accept any invitation which Madame Prénat might choose to extend to him. And she chose to do so pretty often. He became a regular guest at the house, and under the influence and questions of Madame, milder and more genial than mine, he related to us all his affairs. I soon found that my first contemptuous ideas as to his idleness was quite unfounded. He was studying, and studying hard, for the bar. He said he had not the slightest desire for the

position of a country gentleman, merely as a country gentleman, though it might be an excellent and a pleasant thing to have that position in addition to something else. The life would be too dull for him. He felt within him powers for something far more attractive and, to his mind, higher, and he meant to make his mark in the legal world. Sometimes he looked tired and fagged when he came, and, on such occasions, Madame Prénat received him with motherly kindness, which evidently gratified him extremely.

“Your house is my earthly paradise,” he would tell her. “Such an oasis of calm and peace, in the midst of the London desert of vanity and vexation ; and yet not cut off from anything that is good.”

“I am glad you find it so. Come often. I shall be glad to see you.”

She did not say “We shall be glad to

see you”; and indeed she seemed to look upon him almost more as her friend than as mine.

As for me, at first I felt his presence a disturbance and a bore. I felt obliged to give up any employment in which I might be engaged and devote myself to his entertainment, not with a very good grace, it is true, but still to do so. I rebelled against this, and wished more ardently than ever that we had never met. I do not know whether it was with more pleasure than pique—there was certainly something of each sensation present—that I by-and-by discovered that it was wholly unnecessary for me to sacrifice myself thus. Maurice made very small demand upon my time and attention. Often, he hardly seemed to notice me, but would talk the whole evening to Madame Prénat, without asking me a question or seeming to expect

me to contribute any remarks to the conversation. It was perhaps quite natural that at first I should feel slightly offended at this change in his demeanour, after his emphatic protestations at Mrs. Farquharson's. But that soon wore off. It was no laughing matter to me, the possibility of any serious claim being made for me by my relations. To belong to them, in any way, meant to me misery. To remain where I was, for the present, to be always more or less bound up in Félix and in some way connected with him—let that connection be never so distant, never so far off—this meant happiness to me, and I was soon glad enough to perceive Maurice's apparent indifference. If he was annoyed by my coldness or disgusted by my raw intolerance, so much the better, I told myself, and I gradually withdrew myself even more and more into the background,

leaving him to entertain himself or to be entertained by Madame Prénat. It is true that every now and then I saw some slight sign, caught some look, heard some word, on his part which aroused my uneasiness again. I was not altogether tranquil. It was sometimes borne in upon my mind that for all his quietness and seeming indifference it was me whom he came to see, and not Madame Prénat, and that his present demeanour might be but a blind.

But I thought of this as little as possible. I put it away from me. When I found him in the drawing-room, I made no ado about taking up my needlework, or even, if I were pressed for time or deeply interested, in continuing my preparations for the morrow's reading, or lesson, or lecture.

It was on one of these occasions that I first began to feel seriously disturbed and

to realize that Maurice did not view me and my affairs with the indifference I had hoped for.

“ You will excuse me,” I said, going into the room, with a book and a note-book in my hand, “ I have a difficult bit of Parsi here to unravel. I don’t suppose I can do it myself, but the Professor will be very much disappointed to-morrow if he finds that I have not, at any rate, tried to master it.”

“ Pray don’t mention it, I will also take a book,” he adjured me politely ; and I withdrew myself into a corner in which stood a sofa and a little table. I lighted a candle, for it was winter—January, and very dark, cold, and bleak—and I was soon honestly absorbed in my work. It was a passage of verse from a Parsi poet ; not long, but involved and difficult. I had been told to take it home and (with a

sardonic smile) try if I could make anything of it. If I could, it would be more than most of them had succeeded in doing. I was on fire to make something—something that should at least approximate to sense—out of the obstinate, knotty thing. But it baffled me, time after time. When the first part produced sense, the second became nonsense, and *vice versa*. Puzzled, vexed, and disappointed, I frowned, heaved a deep sigh, and looked up, having forgotten for the moment that I was not absolutely alone. My eyes encountered those of Maurice, fixed intently upon me with an earnest, seeking, far from indifferent gaze. His book lay half-closed upon his knee, the long slim fingers of one hand keeping the place, while his cheek rested on his other hand. A thrill of startled, suspicious feeling shot through me, a sense of resentment at his thus

observing me. I sat with my eyes fixed upon him, and his own countenance changing, he said quickly—

“You seem very much puzzled; I wish I could help you.”

“Thank you,” I replied coldly. “No one but my master can help me with this.”

“The learned doctor, do you mean? He will help you, and make it straight for you, and you will say Thank you.”

“Probably he will put me into the way of helping myself,” I corrected him loftily. “He is not too lavish with his information. What is easily gained, he says, is easily lost.”

“Well, he is right, I suppose, in a way. Things that are hard-won are generally taken pretty good care of. I wish I might ask you something.”

“I suppose you can ask me something,

or anything," I replied reluctantly, "but I won't promise to answer it."

"No, you are not fond of making promises to me. And perhaps you will consider this question an impertinent one. I wonder how long you will go on grinding at this philology, and what you will do with it all in the end?"

Sometimes Maurice had a way of asking disagreeable questions to which I either did not choose or did not feel able to reply. This was a particularly disagreeable one. I had once or twice put it to myself. I knew what I meant to do in certain contingencies, but I was not prepared to explain my meaning to Maurice, or even to Madame Prénat. I tried a *tu quoque*.

"And I wonder what you will do with all your legal studies in the end?" I said. "You only follow them just for something

to do now. Whatever you may say about not caring to be nothing but a country gentleman, when the time comes, you will find that it is very pleasant, and gives you plenty to do, and you will forget all this."

"That shows that you do not understand," he replied tranquilly. "Nothing of the kind will happen. But even if such were to be the case, my studies would still have been useful to me. They would have opened my mind and taught me to think. A man ought to have some special study, whether he intends to make practical use of it or not. Just to discipline his intellect, to keep his brain polished and his mind up to the mark, he ought to have it."

"And a woman's brain and intellect do not need polishing and keeping up to the mark. She can get on with smatterings; they are good enough for her," I said per-

versely ; not that I really took much interest in the "woman question." Under the auspices of Elisabeth and of Madame Prénat, I had begun where some people leave off on that matter. I said that because I loved my studies and wanted to provoke my cousin.

"It is different," was all he would say. I was determined he should not feel he had asked me a question to which I was unable to reply, so I pursued—

"You say I don't understand about your legal studies. I am sure you do not understand about these studies of mine. I have a purpose in them. I may need them some day. I expect I shall need them. Some day I may earn my bread by this knowledge that I am now working to obtain."

He sat up, closed his book, and looked at me severely.

"It amuses you to make a jest," he said. "That is a quite impossible contingency."

"Nothing is impossible," I replied, turning over the leaves of my book. "What was possible and right for my dear mother to do"—I bowed my head—"is possible and right for her child, for she never did wrong. There is no example in the world that I should be prouder to follow than hers."

He winced.

"Yes, if it were needful; and no example could be more honourable. But it never will be needful."

"I wonder why not. When I see Mr. Arkwright again, I intend to speak to him about it and to tell him that I wish to work. He will consider that quite natural and honourable—he is a plebeian, you know—he works for his bread. That is

another good example, the best I could have. He will consent to my wish."

"If ever he were so cruel and heartless as to allow the child he had reared in luxury, to think of such a thing——" began Maurice.

"Remember!" I cautioned him, with a feeling of malicious pleasure.

"There is another thing which might happen," Maurice went on deliberately, and looking at me, "which is far more likely to happen, and which, if it did happen, would really cause you to 'look about you,' as they say."

"And that is?"

"That is, that Mr. Arkwright might think proper to get married." (I did not start. I sat preternaturally still.) "Where would you be then?"

"Where I have always been," I replied at once and decisively. "In his care, and

thankful for his goodness. Do you suppose he would marry any one who would hate me? Why should he not get married? His marriage would make no difference."

"It would make this difference, that you would not wish to make a third party. Then you might begin to talk of earning your bread, and then, as in the other case you have supposed, you would not be allowed to do anything of the kind. We should not allow it. You would simply come straight to your home, the home that belongs to you, and would find your father and your sister in my grandfather and my sister. I wish he would get married," he pursued incisively, "that things might be so easily settled. I hope he will. Surely he will. It is most extraordinary that he should not have married before. Will he not marry that Mrs. Reichardt of whom I have heard you speak?"

“If he should, he will marry the only woman worthy to have him,” I replied, with an outward lofty serenity which belied my inward agitation. “But he has not confided his intentions on the subject to me. And, as I say, that would not make any difference. It is not because he might get married that I am thinking of working, but because I wish to do so, and it would be good for me, because I have the power to do it. Perhaps in the end I may become Professor of Oriental Languages at Girton or Newnham—who knows? At any rate, that is far more probable than that I should ever go to live at Rooley Park.”

Rooley Park was the name of the Greys’ estate in Somersetshire. And I announced my intention with peculiar pleasure and satisfaction as I saw the look of anger, which he could not quite conceal, overspreading his face.

“You talk so oddly!” I continued. “You seem to think I am blind and deaf and unconscious about certain things. Do you suppose I imagine for a moment that I should be welcome at Rooley—to your sister, for instance?”

“Maud is a kind-hearted girl. She would soon love you dearly.”

“I am not able to love people dearly on such short notice,” I said drily. “I require to know them first.”

“And how are you ever to know them when you obstinately refuse to approach or be approached by them? There is such a thing as being determined neither to know nor to like a person.”

“And your grandfather,” I continued; “will you try to make me believe that it would be a pleasure to him to have in his house, and introduce to his friends and neighbours, a grown-up granddaughter

whom he has always repudiated, and who would always be making him wretched by allusions to her former life with the low persons—professional singers and the like --whom he despises, but who are to her the best and dearest people in the world?"

"Who said he would enjoy it?" said Maurice, fiercely. "I never knew any one so hard as you are. You seem as if you could not respect or appreciate a man's desire to repair, at whatever cost to his feelings, the wrong he may have done."

This was a view of the case which I was anxious to keep as much as possible in the background, so I said—

"If he were really anxious, spontaneously anxious. But I never hear anything of his anxiety except through you. There—don't get so angry. It was you who began it, and it always will be you—never me, for I hate it more than any subject in

the world. And now, I suppose, it is time to dress for dinner."

As I left the room, Madame Prénat came into it, and perhaps Maurice may have confided to her some of his difficulties. When I look back upon those days, it seems to me almost incredible that the young man should have endured my hardness, suspicion, and impertinence, and still continued to come, still continued to be conciliatory, gentle, complaisant. He had his objects to gain, and was of a resolute character, it is true. As for me, it was not that I felt enmity to him—it was the terror and the desolation which always seized me at the bare idea of having to leave my present life and begin another with *them* that forced from me many a hard word, many a bitter taunt which it was against my nature to utter. It was the instinct of a weak thing confronted

with a strong one ; the weak one, fearing to be coerced or enslaved, tries to show teeth and claws, and to make its poor little natural weapons look like those belonging to something far more ferocious than itself—as if a domestic cat should suddenly set up as a tiger, hoping thereby to overcome the gigantic house-dog which it has in some way offended.

CHAPTER V.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS.

I DO not know whether Maurice, after this discussion, judged it best to maintain silence for some time, but many weeks passed before we had any further talk on the subject. Indeed, we began to see rather less of him ; he was studying very hard for his final examinations before being called to the bar. He had almost given up society, except an hour or two now and then at Madame Prénat's. Of course, I was better pleased that this should be so ; and, for my own part, I too was deeply immersed in studies, and,

as the spring advanced and the season began, in social engagements. I no longer made any objection to going with Madame Prénat to any place to which she might choose to take me. Now and again I heard from Lisa. Those were red-letter days. Often I heard of Felix, of course, singing here and there, at every great festival or entertainment; but I never saw him. Sometimes in the Park I looked about for him, but he was never there when we were. And at last, somehow or other, eight months had glided away since our parting, and it was June, early June, with the world of London in its full tide of pleasure and gaiety; with fine weather, and sunshine and blue skies; with windows and balconies full of flowers; with fashion, folly, feverish *Zeit vertreib*, going on as only in London they can.

One morning, soon after we had sat

down to breakfast, Madame Prénat said to me—

“Ines, are you very busy to-day?”

“Yes. This is my morning with the Professor. I am always busy after that. I like to make as many notes as I can while it is all fresh in my memory.”

“Yes, of course. Nevertheless, I must ask you to be ready to receive some visitors this afternoon.”

“Friends of yours, madame? With pleasure. I will be ready at whatever time you wish.”

“No, on the contrary, friends—or, at any rate, visitors—of yours. Your cousin Maurice is bringing his sister to call upon you.”

I was thunderstruck. All my spirits fled. Maurice bringing his sister to call upon me!

“Madame Prénat!” I ejaculated piteously.

“ Well, Ines ? Why that look of despair ? ”

“ I do not wish to know his sister,” I said, with sudden anger. “ Can they never let me alone ? ”

“ You cannot wish anything about her until you have met her. He is most anxious for you to make her acquaintance.”

“ I wonder whether she is so anxious to make mine,” I said doggedly. “ I believe he makes both his sister and his grandfather do as *he* pleases. And Mr. Arkwright ? ” I went on, as a forlorn hope. “ What would he say ? ”

“ Really, my child, you make the matter of too much importance,” she said, with a touch of mockery in her tone. “ Do try to realize that you are not the centre of the world. And allow me to use the discretion Mr. Arkwright gave me. I know what I am doing.”

I must have looked so downcast that she, relenting, said—

“Now, to convince you quite, I will tell you that I did acquaint Mr. Arkwright with your cousin’s wishes, and I had a line from him to say that he approved.”

“Oh, you have heard from him? May I not see it?”

“Really!” she began, and then, with a slight smile, took a letter from a little case and handed it to me.

“DEAR MADAME PRÉNAT,

“The young gentleman’s wish appears to me to be perfectly natural. Family affection also is a good thing to encourage. By all means let the interview take place, and any other that you may think right.

“Yours truly,

“FELIX ARKWRIGHT.”

I laid this missive down, feeling bitterly mortified. There was no more question of me, it seemed, or of my wishes on the subject, than if I had been a dog or a horse. "The young gentleman's wish," "family affection." My name was not mentioned. It had been less painful if I had not asked to see the letter. Perhaps Madame Prénat knew that, and had allowed me to take the consequences of my curiosity. I handed it back to her.

"Very well. At what time are they coming?"

"Oh, at the usual time for people to call, I suppose. Some time between four and six."

"I will be ready," I said; and I left the room and went upstairs to get ready for my lesson with Professor Willoughby. But I was not happy. For the first, the very first time, I thought of Felix without

feeling happier and gladder for the thought. For the first time, I experienced not the abounding sense of joy and gratitude that I had always known towards him, but the bitter consciousness that I was utterly dependent upon him, and that he did not seem to care what my feelings might be in this matter, or, indeed, whether I had any feelings to be considered at all. Could it possibly be that he wished me, now that I was grown up and had become acquainted with my own family, to rejoin them? Was that the meaning of the two years' separation? Was that the fiat I should hear at the end of the time? These thoughts darted into my mind, and followed one upon the other with the same effect that a physical blow might have had. I felt myself waver, tremble; I caught hold of the back of a chair to steady myself, and stood for a moment holding by it.

When mechanically I went up to the glass with my hat in my hand, I was startled at the reflection of my own face. It was quite white, and my eyes looked large and alarmed.

It just passed through my mind that as we live we learn. Eight months ago I should have been ready to swear that any wish soever expressed to me by Felix Arkwright would have been obeyed by me readily, joyfully, and without the slightest hesitation. Now I felt, with that same uprising of anger and passionate resolution that I had already experienced once or twice, that there were two things I would never do—even for him. I would not remain one instant under his protection, if I had the slightest idea that that protection had ceased to be given as a matter of love, and had lapsed into one of duty; and I would never enter that family of my

father's relations. I could die, or break my heart, I thought—quite unaware how very difficult it is to accomplish either of these things just when one would choose to do so ; I could beg or starve, but never pretend to become one of them.

Somewhat tranquillized by these strong reflections and resolutions, I finished my preparations, took my books, and found myself able to give an undivided attention to my lesson. Then I awaited the unasked-for and unwished-for visit of the afternoon with calmness, if entirely without pleasure. I even went out of my way to make for the occasion a particularly fresh and dainty toilette. I never cared in what old clothes Maurice saw me. But Maurice's sister was quite a different thing. Besides, with a perverse ingenuity of imagination, which amazes me now that I recall it, I fancied that Maurice would be better

pleased to see me shabby than well dressed. In the former case, he could think that Felix was stingy. In the latter, his vexation would be roused by seeing the elegance of attire which went along with my dependent condition. So I took great pains to arrange in a becoming manner my dove-coloured cashmere gown and its bands and belt of gold embroidery. I spent an unusually long time over this dressing; in fact, I had never in my life taken so much pains to show to the utmost advantage any gifts of beauty or of grace with which I had been by nature endowed. Surveying myself, when all was complete, I bowed with dignity to my own somewhat pale and grave reflection in the glass, and went downstairs.

They came towards five o'clock, and, as it happened, we had no other visitors that afternoon; so, as I grimly told myself, it

was, with the exception of Madame Prénat, quite a family party.

Maurice, I could see, was somewhat excited, as he led his sister forward. Yes, it was the same girl—the same rosy, uninteresting face, abundant flaxen hair, and wooden neatness of finish in her stiff, firmly-sitting costume. It was gray again this time—handsome and good; well cut and well stitched together—neither behind the fashion nor before it, but proper, trim, and tidy, like herself.

“Ines, this is my sister Maud. She has come to call upon you.”

“How do you do?” I said, holding out my hand.

“I am very well, thank you,” she replied, her face and eyes becoming quite round in their solemnly negative expression. “Grandpapa wished me to call, and so did Maurice.”

I bowed. My tongue utterly refused to say "It was very kind," or to make the most trivial concession to conventional politeness of that kind. I felt as if any such word would be received as a concession—an expression of pleasure.

"I suppose you are staying in town now?" I said.

"Yes; but only for a short time. We are at the Westminster Palace Hotel. Grandpapa was not well enough to come up for the whole season this year; and we both like the country best."

"Yes? I should think it would be rather dull in the country at this time."

"Oh no! I have a great deal to do. I see after some of grandpapa's business for him; and then there are the schools, and the parish, and—oh, many things."

Here Madame Prénat mercifully came to the rescue, saying, "Then, I suppose,

while you are in town you are very busy, and going out a great deal?"

"Oh no, not much. I want to see the pictures. One must see the pictures, and do some shopping, and go to the theatre. There are several theatres that we have to go to. My brother will take me. Every one is talking about two or three of the plays, and I am sure to be asked about them when I go home again." (She went on talking in a set, formal manner, as if she could not stop.) "And we have been to the Academy, but not to the Grosvenor Gallery yet."

"And were you pleased with the Academy?" I asked politely.

I saw that Maurice was fuming. I saw that the fuming grew more fierce every time that Maud with such complacency mentioned the country and her pursuits in it. This amused me, but I thought I

should like to hear what she had to say about the Academy.

“Oh yes, thank you. I do enjoy seeing good pictures”—with great emphasis, and, on Maurice’s part, fresh fuming—“and I have been very fortunate. My drawing-master at home has been to town, and he marked in my catalogue all the pictures that were worth looking at, and told me what were the good points in them; so I looked at just those, and showed them to grandpapa, and enjoyed it very much. It saved so much fatigue, and made a single visit suffice, you know.”

“Of course, it would save a great deal of trouble,” I said, smiling in spite of myself.

I caught Maurice’s eye fixed upon me with a reproachful glance.

The conversation again seemed about to die a natural death, when Miss Grey her-

self suddenly galvanized it into life again by turning to me and asking, as if it were an entirely new topic,—

“Have *you* been to the Academy yet?”

“Once or twice.”

“And did you like it?”

“I liked a few things ; not many.”

“Oh, did you not like the great picture of the signing of Magna Charta?”

“No,” I replied drily.

“Maud, don’t forget your message,” her brother now interposed desperately.

She turned towards him with a placidly obstinate expression, and replied, “Oh no, I shall not forget ; in good time.”

Tea was now served, and formed a merciful break. Maurice handed the cups round, stood beside me for a few moments, began to tell me what he had been doing for a long time, and asked me what I had been doing. During this

interval, Madame Prénat devoted herself to Maud ; and I, watching, soon saw an entirely different expression cross the girl's face—an intelligence lighted it which had been quite absent before ; the round eyes softened, the solemn, portentous gravity melted into a smile. All at once quite a bright, merry laugh sounded across the room, and it came from Maud.

“ Madame Prénat can work miracles,” I thought within myself. “ I believe, if a person were actually made of wood or stone, she would make her seem like flesh and blood.”

Maud declined a second cup of tea.

“ I never take more than one,” she said.

“ Are you never thirsty for more than one cup ? ” I could not help asking.

“ No, never. I make it a rule never to take more than one. It is time for us to go now. My grandfather,” she added,

turning to me, with all the old expression back on her face, so that I thought, "How she hates me!"—"my grandfather bade me give his kind regards and say he hoped you would give us the pleasure of your company at luncheon to-morrow."

"Thank you. I shall be happy to lunch with you. At what time?"

"Two o'clock, please. Maurice will come for you, and then you will have no trouble. Good afternoon" (to Madame Prénat, with a bow and a slight smile). "Till to-morrow, then," she added to me.

I bowed in silence. Maurice held out his hand and looked at me appealingly. I said nothing, and he had to follow his sister.

"Aren't they nice?" I said bitterly, when they were quite gone.

"And were not you nice, my dear child?"

"Would you have had me rush into her

arms, especially when she behaved like that to *you* ?” I asked with some excitement. “As if you were not fit for her to shake hands with !”

Madame smiled—the smile which, though I was inches taller than she was, always made me feel such a very little girl, so ignorant, so blundering.

“My dear, is it your place to watch over people’s behaviour to me ? Trust me to take care of myself.”

“She is so wooden, so self-satisfied, with her parish and her schools !”

“And you—with your contempt for her parish and her schools and all the little interests of her life ?”

“Was I self-satisfied too ?” I asked hastily, much annoyed at the idea that there could be anything in my manner to be compared with what I so disliked in that of my cousin.

“I do not say that. You were repellent. There, let us hear no more about it ; but let me particularly beg that you will try to be a little more amiable to-morrow at your grandfather's table. I mean it, Ines,” she added very gravely. “You do not show any superiority by giving yourself airs, and you are disappointing me.”

I was silent. I never could gainsay Madame Prénat, but on this occasion I could not see that logical force in her remarks which I usually discovered, after a little reflection. Why was I to make myself so amiable to these people ? I could not understand it. I was glad to put it all away from me and go to the study and bury myself in my books and feel that here was a world which no one could deprive me of.

CHAPTER VI.

GATHERING CLOUDS.

PUNCTUALLY at half-past one on the following day, Maurice, in a hansom, called for me. I was quite ready, having again devoted a whole half hour or more to making my toilette—a quite unprecedented circumstance in my career. He did not even sit down, but put me into the cab, gave the word to the driver, and we set off. Almost before I had had time to begin to think how disagreeable was the entertainment to which I was on my way, he began suddenly—

“Ines, why are you so determined to hate poor Maud?”

It was one of his odious leading questions — questions which occasionally “flooded” me, however little I might have been willing to admit the fact. At first I made no answer ; then I said, not very ingenuously, I fear—

“ I might ask, why is Maud determined to hate poor me ? ”

“ She is not. Her feelings are the very reverse of that. She knows what I wish, and she is so kind-hearted that she wishes the same. She was so nervous yesterday afternoon that she hardly knew what she was doing.”

“ Oh-h-h ! ” I cried, in a long-drawn note of incredulity and indignation. “ Nervous ! How *can* you ? ”

“ She was. I know her better than you do. And I don’t think you were kind. Of course she has not your brains, nor—your beauty,” he added slowly ; “ but she

is a very good sort, is Maud. And when we came out, she said to me, ‘Oh, Maurice, how I wish to-morrow were over!’”

I was mortified and speechless. This put the case in such a very different light from any in which I had as yet seen it—making me the injurer instead of the injured.

“What a delightful, amiable character I must be!” I said coldly.

“You can be, when you choose. You can smile upon that musty old Willoughby, till the sunshine penetrates through even his skull of parchment stuffed with dried roots; and I have seen him look at you sometimes as if he had the dawning of an idea that there are things in the world called young women, and that sometimes they are rather pleasant company.”

“What a refined piece of wit!”

“It is true, whether refined or not. And you encircle Madame Prénat with loving

attentions, so that she almost feels as if she had a dear daughter moving about her. But for *us*——”

He stopped significantly.

“The fact is,” said I, slowly but decidedly, “that it was a mistake our ever becoming acquainted ; or, if that could not be helped, and I suppose it could not, then the matter ought to have ended with acquaintance, and gone no further. I wish you no ill, but good. But I do not see what part or lot I have in any of your concerns.”

“That is a fallacy. It just shows what a strength of revengefulness exists in you. Years ago, my poor grandfather made a mistake—a very bad mistake—in the anger and bitterness of his heart, because his son disappointed him; and now, when he would make it up, you simply hate him, and us, and everything about us.”

“The best way in which he could make it up would be to let things remain as they are, and not step in and want to alter the whole shape of a life over which he has forfeited the claims he might have had. How can he make it up?”

“He wants you to come and live with us.”

“And has he asked Mr. Arkwright?”

“No!” said Maurice, with great though suppressed anger. “How can he ask Mr. Arkwright? But we know what Mr. Arkwright is—a very sensible man, every one says. If you chose to make it easier for my grandfather, the rest would be quickly managed. But you will do nothing.”

“No, I never will,” said I, leaning back and looking, not at Maurice, but straight before me. “You seem to expect a good deal from me—that I should be

perfectly sweet and amiable at the prospect of giving up all I love best, and, in addition to that, should myself take steps towards that giving up. You would not do it yourself."

He was silent. The dispute seemed to me endless. I was weary of it, and thankful when at last our cab stopped before the entrance to the hotel. After such a pleasing and soothing preparation for the visit, I mounted the stairs with Maurice (they had a suite of private rooms), and found myself once more in the presence of my grandfather and Maud. I had not gathered from Maurice's conversation whether anything was to be said about my going to Rooley, but I had an uneasy fear lest I should hear something of the kind. I had, too, a resentful feeling that Maurice had tutored me a good deal on the way hither, and I had no idea of

being tutored—by him. But I remembered Madame Prénat's words—that I was disappointing her—and though a good deal bewildered by the various contending elements of the situation, I did this time greet Maud with a smile and more show of cordiality, and I soon saw that she was not so wooden as I had supposed. She, too, smiled, and insisted on my going to her room to take off my hat, saying it would not be so formal. While we were in her room, a slight incident took place which again filled me with apprehension. I laid my hat on a table, and she handed me a comb and a hand-glass. I passed the comb through my hair, and was surprised to hear her say—

“What beautiful hair you have!”

“Oh, do you think so? There is plenty of it at any rate; but I think it is so dull looking.”

“Oh no! It suits you exactly—your face, and everything; because,” she added, with a rather nervous smile, and a heightened colour, “the rest of you is beautiful too. Do you not enjoy being so beautiful?”

“Indeed,” I stammered, feeling my face grow crimson, “I did not know I was so beautiful. I—that is a thing Madame Prénat does not approve of our thinking much about.”

She nodded. “I should not care whether Madame Prénat approved or disapproved, if I were like you,” she said sedately. “Now, if you are ready, we will go to the sitting-room.”

Here was evidence of the most overwhelming kind (to a feminine mind) that Maurice had been right as to his sister's feelings and I wrong. If anything were said, after this touching proof of dis

interested admiration, I should look very hard and disagreeable if I repelled overtures of friendship. Feeling the responsibility a heavy one, I followed my cousin into the parlour, where lunch was immediately served.

It was not much of a success. How could it have been so? Mr. Grey tried to talk to me, and I tried to talk to him. He asked me questions as to my past life and present pursuits, which I answered with a candour necessitating constant reference to Felix Arkwright; and at every mention of his name the old man winced and coloured in a way which showed me that I was not the only member of the Grey family with an uncommonly thin skin and a very sensitive nervous system. The whole scene became to me so tragi-comic that I felt on the verge of hysterical tears and laughter

combined. Finally, I managed to extricate the talk from this particular grove by introducing Professor Willoughby's name. Every one knew it, of course; even the somewhat unlettered country squire knew the name of Willoughby, so I set forth in glowing terms my admiration of him, and my gratitude for his kindness to me. I spoke with enthusiasm of the grammar of the Zend language which he was even now compiling, and which was to surpass all other grammars and beat all other grammarians of that ancient speech out of the field. I had had the honour of searching through certain books and writings and of furnishing him with some lists of words for this work, and I was proud of it.

“He knows more about the religion and sacred writings of the Parsis than any other man in the *world*,” I concluded, in solemn triumph.

“He is a great scholar, I have always heard,” said my grandfather; “but it seems to me an odd study for a girl like you. It must take up so much of your time.”

“Of course it does. I know very little about it. It is the study of a lifetime really to learn much about it.”

“Girls of eighteen are usually more apt to be engaged with thoughts of their amusements and their lovers,” said the old gentleman; “but if you think it pleases you more just now to dispute over the relative antiquity of the Vedas, or of the—what is the other thing?—the Zend-Avesta, why, I suppose you must have your own way. It will all vanish like a dream when you get married. That’s why I don’t approve of learned ladies,” he added, in his rather croaking voice; “so much good time wasted. Better learn to

manage a household and qualify for good wives and mothers—like Maudie, here.”

I felt somewhat indignant. Of course, I could not dispute with an old gentleman like this, and candidly tell him how wide of the mark were his views and how utterly inapplicable to the present altered condition of things. He would evidently never approve of a woman devoting herself to such a pursuit. Then I found Maurice’s eyes fixed so earnestly and intently on my face, as if to watch the effect upon me of his grandfather’s words, that I was startled, and felt again suspicious and unhappy. But, by way of some kind of a reply, I said—

“I am not going to be married, and I have no establishment to look after. I should not like it if I had. I think it would be a dreadful bore.”

“Oho ! not at all. Wait until the time

comes," said he. "It is then we see what women's great professions come to."

"But I don't make any professions," I persisted. "I have only told you what I do, and how much I like it."

"Yes, yes, of course." He spoke in an indulgent tone which exasperated me extremely. "Have you ever lived much in the country?"

"Oh yes!" I cried enthusiastically. "When I was quite little, when I lived at Lanehead, with Mr. Arkwright—oh, how I liked that! He began to teach me Latin and Greek. Yes, I love the country."

"I did not mean that, exactly. You have not, I imagine, ever stayed in any house in which you had any interest or share of your own."

"No," I breathed. I felt what was coming.

"We are weak enough to think Rooley

a pretty place. Most people like it. I think that during the vacation, whenever it falls, you had better also come and try it. Eh?"

"I—I—it is not for me to say," I murmured, feeling intensely miserable.

"You know that if you say, 'Yes,' Ines, no one else will make any objections," said Maurice, in a low tone.

I looked at them all three. I could not speak. Mr. Grey turned quite pale; his lips quivered angrily. He was evidently on the verge of saying, "Since our home is not good enough for you, keep away from it," or words to that effect. It was the "wooden" Maud who came to the rescue, saying quietly—

"It need not be settled now, grandpapa. Nearer the time I can write to my cousin, and perhaps she will be able to come."

I was thankful for her kindness, and

humbled by it, but I sincerely wished she had allowed her grandfather's anger to explode upon me. It might have resulted in his casting me off for ever.

We rose from the table, and I did not stay long after this. Though nothing had been definitely settled, I felt as if I were being gradually drawn more and more into the net. I would fain have gone home alone, but of course that was not allowed. Maurice came downstairs with me ; another hansom was called, and again side by side we drove to Madame Prénat's. This time my cousin was rather silent till we approached the end of our journey, when he remarked—

“You did not really answer my grandfather when he said that your studies would vanish like a dream after you got married.”

“No. Why should I have answered him ? He does not understand.”

“No. He belongs to a past generation, and so does Maud, though she is but nineteen and as good as gold. He cannot understand that a woman may have the sort of brains that make her love learning for its own sake. And of course he cannot understand that such a thing could exist as a man who would actually rather that his wife cultivated such things than that she should simply be his housekeeper.”

I was silent.

“But there are such men, Ines,” he went on earnestly. “You may believe me, there are.” He looked at me wistfully.

“I dare say there may be. I don’t think men are all monsters. But it makes no difference to me.”

“You will not always say that. The day will come——”

“I will not listen to you,” said I, looking straight at him. “You accuse me of

being hard and unkind and revengeful, but you never seem to think how you are tormenting me, and how wretched you are making me. I call it unmanly."

Maurice's face turned very pale. "I am silenced just now," he replied. "But we are both young, and there is a lifetime before us."

I shuddered a little at his words and at the resolute expression on his mouth. He did not come in, when we arrived at Madame Prénat's, but satisfied himself with shaking hands with me, saying he should go home across the parks; he wanted a walk.

Altogether, it had been a very uncomfortable day, and I felt no security in its being the end, and not the beginning of still further disagreeablenesses. I was not satisfied with the part I had played in it myself, and I was profoundly dissatisfied

with all Maurice's looks and words. Why, I asked myself once again with sudden impatience and irritation, why could they not let me alone ?

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOLIDAYS AND AFTERWARDS.

THE holidays came. I had said nothing to Madame Prénat about the kind of invitation to Rooley which I had received, hoping against hope that I should hear no more of it. It was planned that we were both to spend the greater part of the time at Lanehead, old Mr. Arkwright's. With an ostrich-like instinct, I made my preparations for this visit, in the hope that no one would notice me, and that by escaping from facing the other project, that project would as it were die a natural death and be heard of no more. In vain were my endeavours. One morn-

ing there came a letter from Maud, reminding me of my "promise," and containing quite a cordial invitation to go and stay with them as long as I could spare the time. There was nothing for it but to hand this missive to Madame Prénat, who read it, and, looking at me in amazement, asked what it meant.

"They invited me when I went to see them, but I hoped they would forget all about it," I explained.

"But she speaks of your 'promise'!"

"That is a delusion, at any rate. My words were that it was not in my hands."

"This puts an end to Lanehead. Of course you must go to them. Ines, this is the first time I ever knew you descend to subterfuge."

"Madame Prénat!" I cried, and burst into tears.

But there was no escape. I felt there

was not, and I gave in at once. This time I did not even ask Madame Prénat what Felix would say to it. I knew that she would crush me by replying that he quite approved.

Accordingly, our plans were altered. Madame went to visit some friends in France. I proceeded to Rooley Park, and spent five weeks there. I need not enter into the details of the visit ; in some respects it was better, in others worse, than I had expected it would be. As time went on, I grew to like Maud, and to seek her society ; to avoid Maurice as much as possible ; and I did not gain any feeling of liking for my grandfather. Considering that we looked upon every circumstance of my life from totally opposite standpoints, it was perhaps hardly likely that the affection between us should tend to increase. He regarded an admission

.

into the inner circle of the Grey family as a privilege coming little short of a beatitude. He could not understand that any one to whom such a prospect was held out could be anything but enraptured by it. I, on the contrary, with the memory of my mother's gallant struggle and slow martyrdom quite vivid in my mind; with the feelings of love, of admiration, and of gratitude towards the man who had befriended me and dealt generously by me when all others forsook me—which feelings had been growing and accumulating for eleven years, till they had become part of myself, till the idea of being torn away from that life was torment to me—was far from appreciating the bliss of an entrance into this family. My indifference to the prospect was quite visible to my grandfather, and he could not forgive me for it. For my part, I did my best to be civil

and polite while I was there, and longed intensely for the time to come to an end, and for the ten days at old Mr. Arkwright's, which were to finish the holidays. Madame Prénat was to join me there, and I looked forward to it as to paradise. Everything in this visit tended to make me more and more dislike the prospect of any prolonged stay with these people. Mr. Grey and Maud were conservatives of the old school, with ancient notions about society and the sort of people whom one might safely visit. Madame Prénat was to them a most estimable person, who had kept a school—a nobody, from a social and family point of view. Felix was, of course, just what Maurice had once unguardedly admitted, “a professional singer”—as respectable, doubtless, as such a person could be, but still neither more nor less than a professional singer. They said as

little about them as possible. My dear old Mr. Arkwright would have come into something of the same category. Lord Urmston's librarian—oh yes, we know the Urmstons—delightful people—what a fine library he has! But the librarian? Well, libraries must have librarians; it does not concern us.

Maurice, of course, was far more enlightened, and had no such obsolete notions; but he frequently, I observed, gained his ends by the practice of a masterly inactivity, and, as in town he saw society enough after his own taste, he never irritated his grandfather or shocked his sister by obtruding any account of his intimates, though he would not have hesitated for a moment to "own up" to any company he kept. To any hint about my coming to "settle" at Rooley, I invariably replied that Mr. Arkwright had said I was to

remain for two years with Madame Prénat, and that I did not know what he intended to do at the end of that time. This always silenced my grandfather. But one day, just before my departure, Maud said to me—

“Ines, you are so truthful that I feel quite strange every time I hear you talk about staying two years with Madame Prénat.”

“Why? It is perfectly true. It was said to me.”

“Yes; but you know ‘circumstances alter cases.’ There are circumstances which might make it absurd to try and carry out that project, if you chose.”

I would not ask her what she meant; but, raising my eyes and looking forth into the garden, I saw the figure of Maurice advancing across the lawn to where he could see us in the drawing-room. Maud

looked at me and nodded. I shook my head silently.

I had promised Madame Prénat that I would put aside my studies entirely during this visit, and I kept my word ; but it was at a price. Turned loose, as it were, amidst fields and trees, with the pleasant monotony of country life about me, even with new persons to become acquainted with, it all was not sufficient to chase away reflection ; it was now that the former days came back to me, and I missed them and the dear ones who had made them full of happiness and hope. Madame Prénat, Elisabeth, Mr. Arkwright, Felix—their absence caused a constant ache at my heart. The past year, when I looked back upon it, seemed a very long one ; the one to come, when I looked forward to it, seemed to stretch into the indefinite future without any prospect of an end.

I left Rooley at last, without any definite arrangement for my return having been come to. It was a joyful meeting with Madame Prénat. The ten days at Lanehead, in the beautiful September weather, were sweet, with dashes and flavours of bitterness about them. Here was the garden, there the pond, the trees, the moors—everything as it had been, but with so much gone from it. Nevertheless, it was with the keenest regret that I left it all. We journeyed up to town together, and the beginning of October saw us once more established “at home” in the London square, with all the London sights and sounds around us.

CHAPTER VIII.

I SPEAK TO PROFESSOR WILLOUGHBY.

ONE morning, when I was collecting my books and was full of preparations for plunging into study again, Madame Prénat's waiting-maid opened the door and spoke two words—

“Mrs. Reichardt.”

For a moment I stood speechless, not realizing it, then, with a loud sob of joy, I cast myself upon the advancing figure of Elisabeth, who indeed was there, holding out her arms to me and smiling with what appeared to me the most angelic sweetness.

“Elisabeth, Elisabeth!” was all I could

say, stroking her face, and kissing her again and again. "Oh, how good to see you! Oh, how I have longed for you!"

Elisabeth did not say very much, but I perceived a sort of mist or dew in her soft dark eyes. She smiled and caressed me, and the sight of her face and the touch of her hand gave me the same sensations that one experiences when spring, unmistakable spring, succeeds to winter.

"Why, child," said she at last, "you might be unhappy—are you?"

"Oh no; that is—it is wretched to be cut off from you as I have been, but I cannot be unhappy; Madame Prénat is so good, and the Professor is so wonderful. I thought I was quite happy—till this moment—till I saw you."

"Poor little maiden! Not so little, though," she held me slightly aloof, and surveyed me. "You were always tall, Ines.

I do believe you have grown—filled out, at any rate; and, child, what a beautiful pale face you have got. There! it is red enough now. Do you blush so at an old woman's compliment?—who never does pay compliments, by the way. Now, listen, my dear. I am here for only a very short time—every hour is filled up, of course; but this evening is for you and me. I am staying at Limmer's, and you are to come and dine there with me to-night—alone, yes. I have arranged it all with Madame Prénat. Come at seven; dinner won't be ready then, but I shall. And I will see that you come safely back again. So, nothing more till evening. I am late for an appointment now.”

“Oh yes; I won't keep you. Seven o'clock. Oh, I *hope* nothing will prevent it.”

“Of course nothing will prevent it. I

will tell you to-night all you want to know. We shall hardly have time to get it all in. *Auf Wiedersehen !*”

She was gone, and it was with a very abstracted mind that I pursued my studies for the rest of the day.

Seven o'clock found me installed by the bright fire in her sitting-room at the hotel ; full of eagerness to gain information on different topics.

“ You say Mr. Arkwright is well ? Have you seen him lately ? ”

“ I saw him last night. He was singing at the concert, so I both saw and heard him, of course.”

“ Ah ! ” said I. “ And what did he sing ? ”

She told me his songs, and then added—

“ He is coming down to Irkford soon ” —she spoke in a matter-of-fact tone—“ to spend his last days with us before setting sail.”

“Then it is really true that he is going to America?”

“It is really true. He goes at the end of this month.”

“The end of this month!” I seemed unable to do anything but repeat her words, with a parrot-like want of originality.

“Yes. They are never satisfied, you know, over there, till they have got a sight of everything of ours that we think the most of—and of course some of us think a great deal of him; and they tempt people with such sums of money, and so he’s going.”

“*He* would never be tempted by money,” I said, with the lofty calm of conviction.

“Wouldn’t he? My dear, you know nothing about it. He is tired of the life, and of course the more money he makes,

in a short time, the sooner he can leave it and arrange his life to his own satisfaction. Why should he be indifferent about the money ? ”

I was silent. What I was thinking was, that I had never heard him utter a word implying that money was of the slightest importance to him. So, with calm confidence, I had taken him literally,—and made a mistake, it would seem. The next thought I had was that he was (she said) tired of his professional life, and wishful to leave it ; and ready to make plenty of money to enable him quickly to do so. But I was absolutely certain that he had never said anything to Madame Prénat suggestive of retrenchment or economy in my expenses. I could not have given any grounds for this conviction, but I knew it to be a true one. I became lost in thought. Elisabeth was talking. I vaguely heard

her voice, but knew nothing of what she said. At last I looked up, and inquired—

“Is he going to stay long in America?”

“At least a year; and to sing here, there, and everywhere.”

“Oh!” I said, and became again lost in profound reflection and speculation.

At this juncture dinner was announced, and we sat down to it, but while the man was in the room we discoursed only of indifferent things—of the places we had visited, the things we had done, and of my studies with the Professor, in which she took a lively interest.

At last we were alone again. I was about to attack her with another question relative to Felix, but she suddenly said—

“No, I know what you want to say, Ines. But, if you please, we will talk about something else. I don’t suppose he would like us to be gossiping about him all the

evening. And I want to know all about yourself, and about these wonderful cousins you have been seeing. What are they like? Tell me about it from the beginning."

"The beginning was Maurice," I replied, with a heavy sigh.

"Oh, the beginning was Maurice, was it? Well, I think I know who and what Maurice is, though you told me little enough about him till you went to stay with them. So, make it good now. How was it that Maurice began? I remember him quite well. I have an excellent memory for faces."

I was very unwilling to enter upon this topic. In the circumstances, it appeared to me to be a waste of time. But Elisabeth persisted; she listened to me, and questioned me with a closeness from which I could not escape. She wanted to

hear about his looks, his ways, his capabilities, and his prospects, and especially about the relation in which he stood to his grandfather—in short, about everything concerning him. Then I had to tell about my visit to Rooley Park, and all that had happened there. When I ceased, she was silent for a little while, and then said—

“So no really definite plan was come to as to your going there?”

“No. Every time they hinted at it, I said I was to stay two years with Madame Prénat; and, of course, one of those years is now gone. I would not let it be talked about definitely.”

“Yet, if such a scheme were really broached—if Mr. Grey said it was his wish, and made the right kind of proposals about providing for you, and all that—it would be your duty to agree to it.”

"But, please, tell me," I said, repressing my agitation as well as I could, "why would it be my duty to agree to it? It would not be given from affection—the invitation, I mean. Mr. Grey does not like me; it would only be because his pride or vanity, or whatever you may call it, cannot bear the idea of one of *his* family living, as I am doing, on the kindness of a person on whom they have no claims."

"Still, I am almost sure you should go, if it is talked about again," she said gravely, kindly, but still, as I saw, very decidedly.

I felt as if my last rock of refuge had been submerged, when Elisabeth thus declared for the enemy, so to speak. I felt chill, as if I had come in contact with an iceberg.

"Why?" I asked, in a voice that was nothing more than a loud whisper.

“Because, partly, you are now grown up. You are eighteen, and you are a tall and a stately and a noticeable eighteen, my dear; and, if other things were right, it would be more suitable that you should be with them than as you are.”

“As I am—with Madame Prénat!” I said, desperately clutching at straws.

“With Madame Prénat—but as Felix Arkwright’s *protégée*.”

“And have I not always been like that?”

“Yes; and when you were otherwise friendless, it was all right. When a man interposes between a helpless creature and misery, or ill-usage, or unhappiness, and there is no one else to do it, conventionality is silenced, and Mrs. Grundy for once must ‘take a back seat’; no one would listen to her. But when the child has grown into a woman, and there is the kind

of home awaiting her which naturally belongs to her—when it is a case like this, everything is changed. Yes, Ines ; it is painful, but it is so.”

“Do you mean,” I asked, “that Mr. Arkwright is tired of me—that he would like to turn me over to some one else ?”

“Ines ! What a terrible face ! What a tragic expression ! No, I do not mean anything of the kind. Felix has been a father and a friend to you from the time when you were seven years old. He is not tired of you. He will never want to get rid of you. Don’t think it. It is difficult to explain, and, indeed, I don’t think you need it explained. You are old enough, and know enough of the ways of the world, to understand. And relations have a kind of claim which no other people can have. This old Mr. Grey seems to have found out that he did very wrong in

every way in casting off his own flesh and blood in his anger. He is in a very awkward position. He gave Felix the right to do as he pleased in regard to you. But if he wants to try and rectify his mistake, even so late as this, it seems to me he ought to be allowed to do it."

"No matter what I suffer?"

"Why should you suffer? No one would want to tear you away from your old friends—we could stipulate very decidedly about that. You could see as much of us as you ever have done. The only difference would be that your home at the other times would be at this Rooley place instead of with Madame Prénat."

"Amongst people who don't take the most elementary interest in any of the things which have made up my whole life."

"Ines, have you a very powerful objection to making one of that family?"

"Yes," I almost groaned.

"Shall I tell you what it is that makes you hate it so much?"

I looked at her in silence.

"My dear," said she gently, stroking my hand, "you are afraid your cousin Maurice would want you to marry him, and that, once there, you would be at a great disadvantage in the matter."

My hand started aside under hers.

"You need not go so white, and look so desperate," she said. "Is it not so?"

"Yes," said I. "For a long time I would not believe it. I so hated it. But it is so. And when you speak out, I know it is so."

She nodded gravely. "And you could not marry him?"

"*Never!*" I said, with a shudder of affright.

"Dear, dear! Yet he seems so——"

“He is almost perfect, I believe. And he is so determined that he gets almost everything he wants. If I went there, perhaps he would make me marry him, and then I should die.”

“Oh no, indeed, you would not. And perhaps it is not only he who is determined.”

I sat in gloomy silence. At last she said —

“Well, I do not think you were so very unwise in insisting on your two years with Madame Prénat. That is something definite, at any rate. Perhaps they will drop the subject.”

I felt sure they would not; but I had no heart to make any reply. I did not again mention Felix's name. It had got poisoned to me, somehow. My horizon was clouded.

At ten o'clock Elisabeth, on her way to a reception, dropped me at Madame

Prénat's. She was leaving on the following morning. She was kindness itself, wished me the most affectionate farewell, and told me to keep her posted up in my concerns ; and she added—

“ I wish I could help you.”

I thanked her, and said I knew it was out of her power to do so. I passed a wakeful night, but during that vigil I came to a knowledge which some people acquire even earlier than I did ; some never have it thrust upon them, and others are incapable of taking it in. I came to the sure and certain conviction that, though I had been sheltered and guarded all my life, protected from every rude blast of fortune, made happy and surrounded by friends, yet, in this first great crisis of my life, the only person who could be of any help to me at all, was—just myself, Ines Grey.

*

*

*

*

*

On the following morning, after a lesson with Professor Willoughby, at the close of which he expressed himself satisfied with my performances, I said—

“ Professor Willoughby, supposing I wanted to earn a little money, do I know anything—can I do anything that would enable me to do so ? Do I know enough about philology to be of use to any one in such a study ? ”

He looked at me for some time before fully comprehending me, and said at last—

“ Yes, my dear child, you do. I have sometimes said to my wife that I almost wished you were obliged to earn your own livelihood ; for saying which thing she has always scolded me soundly. But I could give you plenty to do. I would make you my own private secretary in the first place, because I know you and can trust you absolutely.”

“And if ever I should come to you—I mean, if I should come to you before long, and ask you for work, would you give it me?” I asked, trembling with excitement and agitation.

“That very day I will give it you,” he answered me, his pale eyes gleaming upon me through his spectacles. His hand—his long, delicate, thin hand, almost transparent in its spareness—rested on the table near me. I stooped, and kissed it gently.

“Dear Professor!” I said, “you have taken away all fear from my heart by that promise. You will not forget it?”

“I shall not forget it,” said he, with a slow, reflective smile, as he looked down at his hand, and then lifted it from the table and observed it, and seemed to find that it looked much as usual. Then, as if he felt that it behoved him also to do something out of the common, the smile

broadened, he patted my shoulder, and said, "Good child! The best head—and heart too—for the early Sanskrit inflections that I ever met. Find her work? Yes, indeed, I will find her work—as much as she can do."

I went home, as I had told him, free from all fear, calm and contented. The possibility—nay, almost the prospect—of a great sorrow faced me. In spite of Elisabeth's words of kindness, it faced me. Thank God, if it came, I had that within me, it seemed, which would sustain me through it.

Thus ended the first year of my separation from Felix. Shortly afterwards I saw in the newspapers that he had sailed for New York in the Cunarder *Batavia*.

CHAPTER IX.

A CORRESPONDENCE.

NEARLY twelve months later I was still in London, was still under Madame Prénat's roof, outwardly under exactly the same conditions as before. Inwardly, however, things had—progressed, shall I say?—developed, at least. It would be but a tedious task to go in detail into all the causes which at this time made me feel sad and depressed. It is certain that I was sad and depressed, and for one of the best of reasons, namely, that a certain course lay open before me. Everything invited me to enter upon it; my friends

would all have fully approved, had I done so ; many painful, embarrassing, and troublesome questions would have been for ever settled by my acting as it was desired that I should act in this matter. Only, to myself alone the deed did not commend itself ; the bare contemplation of it made me chill and cold with desolation. I could not bring myself to it ; and yet, weak-minded fool that I was, I could not go on my way without making myself wretched with constant fears lest those I loved should disapprove of my refusal to comply with their wishes, and think me a bore, or an ungrateful creature.

Our outside life, as I say, went on in much the same way ; but two things had taken place. My cousin Maurice had proposed to me some two or three months before, and I had refused him. This

refusal it was which I had an inward feeling my friends disapproved. Dreading any future pressure on the subject, I had made good my words and had asked Professor Willoughby for work. He had promptly found me some. I did it at his house, but it was not all for him; it was secretarial work, and the hunting-out of references and quotations, and the reading and making abstracts from many dry and solid books, both for him and for his friends. For this work I received a small salary, with the assurance on the professor's part that *when* I chose to cut myself adrift from the frivolous attractions of society, and really go in for work, I could have enough to support myself humbly but effectually. Madame Prénat knew of this arrangement, and took upon herself to sanction it and assume the responsibility of letting me make it.

Maurice, who still continued to visit us, and who had taken my refusal of his offer in very bad part, may have known, or may not have known, that I no longer worked solely for pleasure. I never made any attempt to conceal the fact, if I did not openly and formally declare that it was so. If he knew, he judged it better to make no comments on the matter. Perhaps he felt that to expostulate, or be angry, without the power of enforcing his will upon me, would be undignified. I had written to Lisa a dry, succinct kind of letter, recounting facts, without commenting much upon them. I felt that I owed it to her to let her know how my concerns went, but after her strongly expressed opinion as to its being my duty to go and live at Rooley Park if it were seriously required of me, I had little hope that she would see this matter as I saw it. She had replied to

my letter, had said she was sorry for my embarrassment, but had added little more. This, I was sure, was another proof that I had not altogether pleased her by the line I had taken. All my old, settled habits, my happy looking-forward to a future, which, even if it should be filled with hard work, would be sweetened by the love and good-will and comradeship of friends—all these were disturbed. I felt no security, no sense of permanency, in anything that I did ; and I felt as if I were cut adrift from Felix for ever.

In the mean time, the correspondence which follows had been going on ; the two first letters of which correspondence I did not see then, nor for many a long day afterwards. Yet I must give them here, in their due order, and they will suffice to explain a good deal which to me remained dark for a long time after this.

From MRS. REICHARDT, *in Irkford, Eng-*
land, to FELIX ARKWRIGHT, *at Chicago,*
Illinois, U.S.A.

“Irkford, August 15, 18—.

“MY DEAR FELIX,

“According to your account of yourself, you will receive this when you are in Chicago for the second time. Two visits ought to have made you quite ‘larnt up,’ as they say here, in the manners and customs of Chicago. Is it true that there they live in just twice as much of a hurry as they do in New York, which, with this exception, is the fastest city in the universe? And is it true that the Chicago girls are very plain, and have immense feet and hands? I do so want to know the truth on these two points. You must have had rather a delightful summer, it seems to me, judging from the account you give of yourself and your doings.

How I should revel in a little of that splendid dry heat of which you so ungratefully complain! I hope it will not be all over by the time we get there; surely it will be just about the time for Indian summer, won't it?

“From this you will gather that we have decided upon the right and proper course. We are coming, my *Väterchen* and I, and I am looking forward to it as if I were a girl of eighteen, only much more intelligently, I flatter myself! I am reading it up, and asking questions about it of every one I know, and studying the politics, till I really think I begin to have a glimmering notion as to what Republicans and Democrats actually are. And I have been longing for the moment when we shall leave Queenstown behind us, almost more than for that other moment when we shall see Sandy Hook before us. Only

now the father says that, according to your programme, you will be at Baltimore, Maryland, when we arrive, and that we had much better go on one of the Allan liners, and land in the monumental city itself and have a few days' longer sail, than go to New York and have a long, uninteresting railway journey to make before we meet you. And he is right, as usual.

“Now, there is another thing to which you must give your attention. You have been very busy, and very much fêted, and so forth, and I dare say you don't want responsibilities thrust upon you from three thousand miles off, especially before the time at which they are fairly due. Nevertheless, I must remind you that by the time we join you, it will be nearly the end of those two years during which you told Ines she was not to see anything of you.

You will not be at home at the end of that time ; that is just because circumstances make it more desirable that you should stay longer where you are, and no one is to blame for that. Of course it will be quite easy to tell her, *if you choose to do so*, that your tour has been a longer one than you at first contemplated, and that she must stay quietly at home with Madame Prénat till you return. That would be easy, for you, and she would never dispute the fiat. But I must tell you that poor Ines is not at all happy just now. She is persecuted with a suitor—no other than her cousin Maurice Grey, who apparently has some extraordinary influence over his choleric old grandfather, for he has got his consent to the marriage taking place if he can obtain that of Ines. He has not succeeded, so far. Perhaps she really does not care for him ;

perhaps she fancies she does not. At any rate, she steadily refuses to listen to him ; and at the same time she has an impression that all her friends would greatly approve of the marriage, including you to whose views she naturally attaches some importance. She hates to be disappointing the people she thinks so much of. At the same time, she hates the marriage, and she knows that old Mr. Grey would not really love it, though he has been subdued into giving his consent. She is in a miserable position. The whole thing makes her wretched. I have not said much to her about it ; you have silenced me on the subject. But I must say I hate to see a girl badgered in that way, and I don't think it fair to her, either. She has been too long in the same groove ; she cannot see things clearly or impartially. I think she ought to get out of it all—yes, even

out of our good Prénat's influence—for a time. You know the tendency of the latter's influence—to make all who come under her hand so fastidious and 'utter' in their ideas about men and things, that ordinary mortals seem quite common and unclean to them. I have noticed a little bit of this in Ines lately, and I am of opinion that a journey across the Atlantic, and a taste of the rough fresh air of that undeveloped society and civilization in which you are now 'located,' would do her a power of good, in every way. Master Maurice is very determined; let him wait. Perhaps absence will make her fonder. I want her to come with us—there, I have said it. She need not trouble you. [Mrs. Reichardt's face, as she wrote this Machiavellian sentence, may or may not have been worth studying.] And I want you to let me have the pleasure

of bringing her with me. She is to be my property for the time being ; my guest, my visitor, my child. I so often spend my money and my energy in such very unsatisfactory ways. Nearly always, when I try to 'do good,' I make a mess of it, and get horribly cheated into the bargain. I fear mine is one of the 'first-class hearts and fourth-class heads' spoken of by a recent social prophet. This time it is the first-class part of me, the heart, that I would consult. I simply want to please myself and gratify myself, and consult my own wishes and inclinations, and I'm sure you will never be the man to thwart me in this design. You shall have no responsibility in the matter ; I will take it all. And, let me tell you, the child is by no means without views of her own, and intentions as to the career she desires to pursue. I think she will do her own way

in the end, but most naturally she would like to have your approval before settling down to the life she thinks of. You will have time, if you write at once, to let me have an answer to this some fortnight or more before we sail. I am in a great hurry now, and cannot say any more. Write at once. Good-bye.

“LISA.”

From FELIX ARKWRIGHT *to* MRS.

REICHARDT.

“Chicago, August 31, 18—.

“MY DEAR LISA,

“Thanks for your letter. Since you yourself have introduced the odious topic of the weather, you must even excuse me for saying that I agree with all my heart with the person, whoever it was, who said that the climate in these northern States consisted of nine months of winter,

and three of—hell—if you will have it. It is perfectly true, and I will say no more about it, but reply to your letter.

“I am delighted that you and Mr. Reichardt are coming, and shall welcome your advent with heartfelt joy. Your father-in-law is right as to its being better for you to come direct to Baltimore, rather than to go first to New York, and, all being well, I expect I shall be there at the time of your arrival. So that is all right.

“All your other remarks are full of wisdom, as usual, and you did well to remind me of what I had almost forgotten—that stipulation about Ines remaining for two years with Madame Prénat, and that the time will have almost expired. I remember, we had quite a discussion about it before I left England; and you, I could see, scorned my ideas in the matter. I think I did not arrange it so

badly, after all. By all means, if it will give you any pleasure to bring Ines with you, in the way you suggest, do so. You have my full consent. It is true, she must have quite grown out of the schoolgirl now, and must be rather an independent young person, if she has 'views' for the future. I am curious to know what they can be. She was a very sweet and lovely child; that I remember quite distinctly. With regard to the young man, I confess I had not thought of his falling in love with her, but upon my word, except for the fact that they are cousins, I see no objection to the match. There's a sort of poetical justice in it, too—don't you think so?—with regard to the grandfather. Things like this are always happening. But, as you say, she must not be teased into it. They are both very young, and can afford to wait till they know their minds thoroughly.

As for my wishing to be relieved of her—what nonsense! Let her ‘come along’ when you do, and I will myself convince her of that, poor girl! Give her my love, and tell her I shall expect to see her with you. Then she can, if she pleases, tell me her objections to Master Maurice, and I will do my best seriously to consider them. What an odd position for me to attain to in my old age—a kind of *Schiedsrichter* between these young people!

“As for what you ask about the Chicago girls, and their feet and hands, I can only tell you that to me their feet and hands look like those of other girls. And as for the fastness of Chicago, I suppose it is rapid enough for those who care for that kind of rapidity—of the market and the stock exchange. Socially considered, I have not found it overwhelming in any way. I like the southern women; so will

you, when you see them. Some of them you must and shall see, and we shall be well on the way to them at Baltimore. Write to my banker's at New York. I am a little uncertain as to where I go next. 'Onwards—but whither?'

“Always yours,

“FELIX ARKWRIGHT.”

From MRS. REICHARDT *to* INES GREY.

“Irkford, September 1, 18—.

“MY DEAR INES,

“I have delayed writing to you for more than a week, because I wanted to be definite when I did write. Now I can write and can be definite too; so, without beating about the bush, I will tell you my plans, and I hope you will see your way to falling in with them, and giving me a real pleasure at the same time. You know that Mr. Reichardt and

I made up our minds to go and join Mr. Arkwright in America for the last part of his tour. It is a journey we have long wished to take, and the opportunity was a tempting one. Of course we shall not be with him all the time, as we shall have a lot of ground to go over which he has done already, but I hope he will be able to come with us to a good many spots we wish to visit. We leave in about a fortnight from now, and I want you to come with us. Do not make any scruples or objections. I have thought it well over, and it is all right. 'This is my show,' if you please. I have been looking forward to it for a long time, and when I had arranged all my plans I wrote to Mr. Arkwright and told him what I wished, and with his usual good-nature he at once sent his consent,—his love, and you were to come with us, and he should hope to

see us all at the same time. So that will be all right. You are going to be my daughter for some months now, if you will. It will make me so glad. And how delightful for us to get our first glimpse of the New World together! It will double my pleasure. What a lot of things we shall see before we get back—and hear too. There is one thing we shall miss, on account of the season of the year at which we go—the ‘summer boarders’ spoken of by Mr. Howells in his novels. Don’t you remember them in ‘The Lady of the Aroostook?’ I am dying to know what ‘summer boarders’ are really like, but I fancy that as a race they die out annually by the end of September. And ‘board walks’ are another feature that I am anxious to see for myself; also ‘ocean parlours.’ We must see an ‘ocean parlour;’ it gives an idea of such space, doesn’t it?

There are many other things that we shall rejoice in, I know. Felix says their fruits and vegetables are a dream, and that terrapin soup and devilled crabs, once eaten, dwell in the memory for ever. What a gourmand I grow in my old age !

“ So much for the pleasure part of it. Now for the serious side of the question. My dear, you are no longer a child, as you know ; and though I have said little about it, I have fully realized that you have had great difficulties with regard to your cousin Maurice. I said nothing, because what could I say ? But I know all about it, and am convinced that the best thing is for you to get away from your present surroundings for a time. Let me be quite frank with you. I have told your guardian how things stand. His views on the matter are, that if it were with your full consent and inclination, he sees

no objection to the marriage, but in no other circumstances would he think of it. He would not for a moment have you force your feelings on the subject. And I think he would, perhaps, if he saw you, like to ask you a few questions about it. It will be much the most satisfactory way of settling the matter once for all. And you won't be surprised, dear, if he should have forgotten something of the details of your life. You see, he has had a busy time over there. He has been travelling, seeing new things, becoming acquainted with heaps of new people. He has lived through rather more—to put it mildly—during these two years, than you or I have; and it is only natural that it will perhaps cost him a little effort to take up the thread of our lives. But we won't mind that, will we? We will soon refresh his memory.

“If, in the end, you should decide to carry out your own plans, and to make a path in life for yourself—and I am far from disapproving of such a resolution—it will always be a pleasant episode for you to recall—this journey, I mean. So thinks your friend Elisabeth, who hopes ever to be your friend. Now, I have said nothing to Madame Prénat, because I wish to leave your choice free. I have put the matter before you; it is for yourself to decide in it. If you make up your mind to come, send me a wire, and I will then write fully to her; but you will tell her, of course, as soon as you have decided. And when I know what you will do, I can give you also some further details in the matter. My love to you, dear child.

“Ever your affectionate

“LISA.”

This letter, coming when it did, caused me mixed emotions. As may be imagined, I was highly excited at the prospect opened out to me. Looked at from one point of view, it promised nothing but pleasure. How good Elisabeth was to me! How delicate her way of arranging things; how faithful and lasting her kindness! For a few moments I gave myself up to the prospect disclosed by this unexpected invitation with unmixed delight. To travel away from my present surroundings, with friends so dear as these; to meet Felix again; to renew, even in a far-away, distant land, some of those happy hours and days which in the past had been so delightful—it was nothing short of bliss to contemplate such a possibility. By the brightness and light-heartedness which came over me, I suddenly knew how very sad and dejected I had been.

And this sadness was not at once to be chased away, for all at once a shadow came athwart the prospect. I was no longer a child—most truly Lisa said it—no longer irresponsible and in the hands of others ; I knew it full well. I should go with Elisabeth ; I should see Felix ; I should have to explain to him, and doubtless he would, as she said, have forgotten a great deal out of my life, at any rate. They would be very kind to me, but the hated topic would have to be renewed ; it would once more be broached : your cousin Maurice wishes to marry you ; what are your objections to him ? I was so well aware that I had no business to have objections. I saw so clearly how easily, charmingly, and harmoniously such a marriage would settle every point in my vexed relations with my father's family, and even with Felix himself. And last of all, but

not least—perhaps largest—in spite of what Elisabeth said, I could not help feeling as if Felix not only approved of this match but wished for it. I suspected him of no sordid motives. I did not for an instant doubt his generosity and goodness, or think he ever had grudged, or ever would grudge, anything he had done or could do for me. It was not that. It was other things. I could not have explained them—at least, I would not try; but I knew in my heart what they were, and that in all this kindness of Elisabeth's, the greatest kindness was that she proposed for me to make this tour as her *protégée* and not as that of Felix Arkwright.

I was alone as I thought it all over. I was not debating whether I should accept her proposal or not—I never had the least intention of doing anything else; it was the best thing in every way. But

I was suddenly overcome with a great loneliness and dreariness. I covered my face with my hands and wept, saying to myself, "Oh, cruel world! cruel, cruel world! and life that is so full of ache and bitterness!"

This, however, I soon felt to be folly. In spite of all worries and all anxieties, I found my heart elated by the prospect afforded me. I quickly recovered myself, dried my tears, put on my things to go to Professor Willoughby's, and on my way thither despatched a telegram to Elisabeth, saying, "I accept your invitation; shall write to-day."

At the Professor's, when my morning's work was done, and just before the lunch-bell rang, I told him what was going to happen. I had revolved things in my own mind; I knew what he would say; and when he had got over his first surprise

and vexation at the prospect of the interruption in our work, I said that I did not think I should be more than a few months in America, and that I hoped he would keep open for me on my return the place I now held. I should never like to be with any one else so much as with him, and I should look forward to rejoining him. At first he promised promptly to do as I wished. Then, with a vast effort bending his learned mind to mundane matters, he said—

“But, my dear child, it occurs to my recollection that I have heard vaguely, from some one—who my informant was I cannot remember—something about a young gentleman, who seeks your hand in marriage—yes”—he looked at me, as if surprised—“I suppose it might be so; you are not what they call a schoolgirl any more—and who only awaits your consent

and that of your guardian to make you his wife."

"There is such a person," said I dryly and uncomfortably; "but he will never obtain my consent."

"No? Young ladies, I have heard—and indeed it appears even in the ancient legends of the East, as well as in the so-called poetry of the present day—are given to changing their minds on such matters. You must not do that, and make a fool of me—you must not, indeed."

"Professor Willoughby, I assure you it is chiefly in order to get this thing settled, to get it absolutely decided that I never need think of marrying him, that I am going away now. I can't bother you with explanations; but that is how it is. And as soon as it is really arranged, how glad and thankful I shall be to come back to you."

"Well, well!" said he, wishful to believe

me, "let us leave it so. I shall miss you very much—very much." And his large pale eyes gleamed upon me again through their spectacles.

"You may safely leave it so," said I. "I wish I could make you understand how safely."

This was obstacle the first removed. I could come back to the Professor, and be sure of a welcome, that was evident. I returned in good spirits, and broke my news to Madame Prénat, telling her she would hear from Elisabeth very soon. She was very silent all that day, but on the following morning she received a long letter from Elisabeth, some of which, but not all, she read to me. She uttered many exclamations ; nodded her head, agreed, disagreed, and finally, unable to control her interest in the matter, sat down and talked to me about it with eloquence ;

giving me full directions as to what I was particularly to observe and study in the great Republic—things social, political, literary; with many a warning and admonition. Then we discussed what I was to take, and what to leave; and while we were in the midst of this, in the afternoon, Maurice was announced. He had not been for a long time. Instantly he observed our preoccupation.

“You look as if something very interesting and exciting has happened,” he said to me.

“Something has,” I told him. “I am going to see the world.” And then I revealed the prospects that spread before me. He looked exceedingly grave, and for a time was silent and thoughtful, but at last discussed the matter with some interest. At last, shortly before taking his leave, he said to me—

“Have you Mr. Arkwright’s address?”

“No.”

“But your friend, Mrs. Reichardt, must have it. I am going to write to him. I ought to have done it before. If I give you a letter, will you get her to send it on to him?”

“Why trouble to do that?” said I with great composure. “I am going to see him myself. I am going to come to some understanding about my own future. I have been made wretched by the false position I am in. Write your letter and give it to me, and I will myself take charge of it, and give it into his own hands. Then the whole thing can be settled at once.”

“I can’t understand you. You have been so determined against me, and yet you will give him this letter! I will tell you the truth about it. I shall ask him

in it to use all his influence in my favour, because I know he has so much influence over you. Now, what do you say?"

"What I said before. I will give him the letter. It will make no difference—none at all."

"I cannot help hoping that it will make a difference," said Maurice, the look of determination which I knew so well settling on his pale face.

It had cost me many a pang, that resolute expression. I had seen it so often, since the day on which I had refused him absolutely; and he, equally absolutely, had told me that until he knew I was another man's wife, he would never give me up. I made no reply to his last words, but again said I would take the letter and faithfully deliver it into Felix's own hands. He sent it to me on the following morning. I looked at it all

round, from its address to 'Felix Arkwright, Esq.; favoured by Miss Grey,' to the big red seal with the coat-of-arms, which fastened it. Curious, I thought, that I should be the bearer of such a missive. Some months ago I should have been afraid to assume the responsibility; I should have done all I could to avert the sending of such a letter; but now I felt as if I did not care anything about it; only I would give it honestly into Felix's hands. I packed it carefully away with other papers. There it might lie till the time came to discuss it.

Maurice did not call to say good-bye, but wrote a note, wishing me enjoyment. There was a certain severity about this note, as, indeed, there was about all that Maurice said and did. Always I felt in my intercourse with him that he looked upon me as a thing to be not only loved

very much—for I knew he loved me—but also improved in many ways. There was constantly some disapproval implied in his dealings with me, and it was this fault-finding attitude which exasperated me more than anything else. I knew what he wanted, that his standard was high in all matters ; but what I objected to was the fact that it was *his* standard which he wanted every one else to conform to. His wife, I felt sure, when, or if ever he had one, would have very soon to desert any standard of her own and conform to his. Such compulsion set all my feelings into a state of rebellion. I would never conform to his standard. I would give his letter to Felix, and listen to his praises, if need be ; but I would never love him any better, nor submit to his will any more than I did now. And with this resolve, I packed the matter out of my mind as

I packed the letter into my trunk, and thought of it as little as possible.

Elisabeth's orders to me were—to get all I wanted as quickly as possible, and go down to Irkford to her, that we might have a few days together before sailing. My views as to an outfit were very moderate. I merely thought of purchasing two or three garments supplementary to my existing wardrobe. Madame Prénat was more particular. When I expostulated, she told me she knew what she was doing, and was acting on the best authority. I felt it to be a trifle, and submitted. I cut down the “few days” with Elisabeth as much as possible ; not because I did not wish to be with her, but because the Professor made loud lamentations over being robbed of my services, and therefore I stayed with him as long as I could.

I had a touching parting from him and

Mrs. Willoughby. The latter, a little fat, jolly woman, with a mania for lapdogs and expensive dressing-gowns of gorgeous design, kissed me, congratulated me on my prospects of travel, and told me to enjoy myself while I could.

“Amuse yourself,” said she. “I begin to see wrinkles on your forehead already, and it is too early for them to be there. Forget all about your horrid, dry work. He will have plenty of it ready for you when you return. If I had not Rodo and Coco”—her two spaniels—“to console me,—dear creatures!—what a dismal life I should lead. Never marry a professor of the oriental languages, Ines! This advice comes from my heart.”

“Ah, unworthy, unworthy advice!” cried her husband, who had got into a singular frame of mind, had pushed his spectacles back till they rested on the top of his

head, and had then forgotten that he had done so. He held my hand for some time, struggling with mixed feelings. At length he placed his left hand on my head, and said in solemn tones—

“God bless you, and keep you, my good child, and be with you in the New World as in the Old, and make you bear your old teacher in your remembrance.”

He paused. So solemn were his words, so impressive his tone, that my head sank; I was so moved by his fatherly kindness, that I was on the verge of bursting into tears. Mrs. Willoughby, who, in reality, was inordinately proud of her husband and his attainments, drew long breaths of emotion as she watched this scene. Suddenly, in a different voice, he added—

“And if by any chance you should find an opportunity of learning anything—*anything* at all fresh on the subject of the

Indian dialects—no matter which of them, do not neglect it, I implore you. Never be without your note-book, and take every occasion to profit by what you hear.”

“I will ; I will, indeed,” I assured him, wringing his hand ; and half-laughing, half-crying, I once more wished them “Good-bye,” and left the house.

That evening Elisabeth met me at Irkford, and a very few days later, she and Mr. Reichardt, her maid, and myself, full of anticipations of new and exciting scenes, embarked in the good ship *Caspian* for the port of Baltimore.

PART V.

CHAPTER I.

INES WRITES.

STEAMING past the coasts of New Jersey, and Delaware, and Maryland, at last we steamed first into and then up Chesapeake Bay, and past the world-known spots whose names even yet have power to thrill, and will retain that power for countless generations; past Fortress Munroe and Fort MacHenry; all day long, till it grew dark, and as we went sailing by the smiling shore of Anne Arundel county, or as a native Baltimorean on board persisted to our great bewilderment in calling it, "Annie 'Randle county," it was deep twilight and, before we landed, there was

nothing to be seen but multitudes of shimmering lights, rising higher and higher in lines and tiers and terraces of the beautiful city; and against the clear dark sky masses of buildings, some of those near at hand, which loomed upon us like giant towers rising high into the heavens, out of the very water itself, we afterwards discovered to be nothing more romantic than "grain elevators." But before us in the distance these buildings represented the streets, the warehouses, the churches, and the monuments of the capital of "Maryland, my Maryland."

How strange it all was, after the voyage! It seemed to me as if that had been the reality, and this were a dream—this sudden bustle, this proximity to firm ground; the hurrying crowds, the shining, grinning negro faces, the cries, the calls, the hubbub. It was after eight o'clock at night, and we

stood on deck, waiting for we hardly knew what, and silent in the midst of the tumult. Elisabeth suddenly said—

“Father! Ines! a thought has just struck me. If that unhappy man is singing anywhere to-night he won’t be here to meet us. He cannot, you know. And, of course, he will be singing somewhere. Did you ever know such a miserable idea? We shall just have to look out for ourselves.”

“I never thought of that,” said I blankly.

“Nor I, until this very moment. Look! here’s the tug, I expect—tender, or whatever it is—coming for us. If he is coming, he will be on it. Stand here. We can see each person who passes.”

I did not speak, but with my heart beating violently I did as I was bidden—stood still and looked, till at last I saw a face which I felt as if I knew, and yet

did not know. I must have seen that face before, and yet it was so strangely altered. I was puzzled. Then I saw that Elisabeth made a quick step forward.

“Mr. Holgate! here we are. Has he sent you to meet us?”

Mr. Holgate! My agitation ceased. I did not know whether I was most relieved or most disappointed. I remembered now all about him. It was our host at Moor Isles, of whose fortunes and misfortunes Elisabeth had one day during our voyage given me a long account, to which I had not paid as much attention as I ought to have done. But I had dimly gathered that for some reason or other he was out here with Felix, as his secretary and “help.” He stepped forward now, lifting his hat and smiling at us.

“Yes, Mrs. Reichardt. He is singing to-night at the Academy of Music. The

concert began at eight, and so he could not come to meet you. He was awfully disappointed, but he sent me, and I hope you'll let me do anything I can for you."

"We shall be only too thankful," said she, with the tact and kindness which never failed her. She rightly divined that the young man, though he put a good face on the matter, felt himself to be no efficient substitute, except as a mere assistant in getting our things together, for the person whom we all wanted to see; and she had time, even in the midst of her disappointment, to do and say all kinds of pleasant things calculated to make him imagine that his presence and assistance were quite invaluable to us. Felix often told her that she made fools of people in this way; but I have always thought it exceedingly pleasant to be thus made a fool of. At her cordial words Brian

Holgate brightened up wonderfully, found our things for us, and I heard him telling Elisabeth that Felix had taken rooms for us at the St. James's Hotel, where he himself was staying, that he was coming to us the instant the concert was over, and that he hoped we should not all be fast asleep by the time he got in.

It seemed a long and tedious business before we and our belongings at length were bestowed in the shelter of an uncommonly comfortable hotel. Felix had engaged a private sitting-room for us.

"He said he did not want his first meeting with you to take place in the reception room," said Brian Holgate, laughing. And after he had done all he could for us he went away, saying he would go to the Academy of Music, see Felix in the interval, and report our safe arrival.

"Give him our love," said Elisabeth, "and tell him to hurry up. We are very tired."

He departed. We went downstairs to sup, with a feeling of disappointment at our hearts, in spite of the charm of novelty over everything—in spite of the array of delightful little dishes and plates and saucers which collected around each of us, *more Americano*.

We supped, and returned to our sitting-room. The lamps in the street were lighted, the night was mild and balmy, a delicious air came in at the window. I went towards it. I hardly heard or, rather, hardly heeded Elisabeth's sigh of fatigue, as she said—

"Well, I'm going to see what Bolton is doing, if she has got under weigh with her unpacking. Ten o'clock—half-past ten, I declare. Surely he can't be much longer."

I had gone to the window and, kneeling down before it, I gazed out upon the street. The sky and the great luminous stars, so huge and so near-looking, were above ; below, the cobble-stoned street, the rattling tram-cars jingling along, white people strolling, coloured ones strutting about in the night air. A coloured waiter had brought a lamp, and set it on the centre table, and in his plaintive voice had warned us against lifting the mosquito net that hung before the window ; but, heedless of the precaution, I moved it a little to one side, and leaned out, and thought and wondered.

It seemed as if I had been but a short time there, when on an instant I became conscious of the presence of some one behind me. I had heard no sound—there was too much noise from the street below. I do not know how or why I became

aware of this presence, for I did not even know that I was alone. Instinctively I remained where I was, without turning or moving.

Then a hand was placed on my shoulder, and the voice of Felix spoke my name.

“ Ines—all alone ? ”

I quickly rose to my feet, and looked at him in silence, but saw at a glance that the room was empty save for us two. He was looking at me with a smile—a kind and welcoming smile, such as I had hundreds of times received from him before ; pleasure and good-will were in this smile, and his hand slid from my shoulder downwards, till it reached my hand and held it. And, as he looked, a change came over his face and into his eyes. The smile died away. Profound gravity succeeded it. He did not follow up his first words by any others, but

simply looked at me, till I at last found voice, and said softly—

“Yes; I did not know they had gone out of the room. So I am the first to see you, Monsieur Félix, after all!”

And I looked at him, smiling too; while he still held my hand. He made no reply at all for some little time; but at last said, in a voice totally different from that in which he had first greeted me—

“How you are changed—*how* you are changed!”

“Am I? Nobody else has said so. You are not. You look just the same as when I last saw you.”

“I dare say. Two years, at my time of life, do not make the difference that they do at yours.”

To this I had nothing to reply. But I wished he would loose my hand, for it seemed to me as if every finger must

betray by its pulsation the wild beating of my heart. But he did not loose my hand ; he stood still, and looked at me, and seemed to have forgotten that there could be anything to say. As for me, as I stood there, I realized, without putting it into words, that whatever might have been the ostensible object of my journey hither ; whatever Lisa and I might have said to ourselves or to each other about my seeing Felix, and getting my future course settled, and so forth ; in this moment—I could not disguise it from myself, it was the most overwhelming one of my life—I knew that it had been better for my peace of mind never to have seen him again ; better to have stayed in London, and battled down disappointment and monotony ; and, if necessary, to have dismissed Maurice periodically, till his pride or his common sense should have

disgusted him with the part he was playing. This I knew—knew, too, what the feeling had been which, slumbering deep down in my heart, and not awakened by proximity to Felix, had yet filled me with that horror of even listening to Maurice, which had so mortified him; had so surprised both Madame Prénat and Elisabeth, by what they thought its exaggerated nature. It takes some time to write it all down; it took not a minute to possess itself of my mind. The revelation was made; henceforth, whatever others might think, I *knew*.

And at last I made a little movement to withdraw my hand from his. Then, all at once, he started slightly, gave a half laugh, and said—

“Pray forgive my standing and staring at you in this way. As I told you, I find you changed. Come and sit down here,

on this 'lounge,' as they call it here ;” and he led me to a sofa which stood near the window, and placed me on it ; and then, half seating himself on the edge of a table, he said, “ It seems so absurd to keep repeating the same thing, but I do really believe you have grown taller. I am sure you were not so tall when—that day we went up to London together. Do you remember ? ”

“ Yes, I remember. I have not measured my height since then,” I said, smiling. “ And I hope, as I am so much changed, that you find me improved too.”

At this the inexplicably grave and surprised, almost puzzled, expression disappeared from his face. He laughed.

“ That question is much more like the Ines of my former acquaintance than anything that I have yet seen or heard from you. Improved ? Oh, certainly ; at least,

I think so. By the way," he added suddenly, and looking keenly at me, "did you see my letter to Lisa about your coming here?"

"No; I have seen no letters, except the one she wrote me, inviting me to come with her."

"Oh!" He looked relieved and, at the same time, amused. "Of course, she always knows exactly the right thing to do or not to do. And you had a pleasant voyage, I hope?"

"I suppose so. I don't quite see the joys of an ocean passage in a floating palace, but I think it was a good voyage."

"At any rate, you have arrived safely. And you are prepared to enjoy yourself here?"

"I——"

I came to a sudden pause. Enjoyment was not exactly what had been in my

thoughts. Excitement, perhaps, discussion, and the making straight of crooked paths. But was that enjoyment? And now I knew that emotion, agitation, self-repression, would take a large share in my life over here. But I did not see my way to enjoyment—not to enjoyment of a calm and serene kind, at any rate. I was saved from the pain of having to give what might seem an ungracious answer. The door was opened, and Elisabeth was with us.

“Ines, you might have told me he was here!” she exclaimed, coming forward.

Covered with confusion, I was silent, as I stood up.

“That is a pretty kind of greeting, after all this time!” said Felix, shaking both her hands long and heartily. “Well, Lisa, this is a ‘sicht for sair een.’ I should have known you, at any rate, any-

where. As to Ines, I have been trying to make out who she is."

"Oh, you find her changed," said Elisabeth, carelessly. "I don't see that you need be so much surprised at that. Do you know, I began to think you were never coming. They must give inordinately long concerts in this country."

"Not so very long; but they don't care for anything that begins early. I suppose the white people go to bed some time or other, but I don't think the darkies ever do."

"Well," said she, "I am but a mortal woman. I've been having some of my things unpacked, with a view to getting into bed with the greatest possible speed, as soon as I should have seen you. Well, how are you? You look well—you do look well, Felix. Your hard work has done you no harm, at any rate. And here

we all are—together! Can you believe it?”

“Hardly,” said he, in a tone of satisfaction, as he looked from one to the other of us. “It is almost too good to be true. You are true to your resolution, Lisa; you do not change.”

“Of course not. Did I not always tell you I never meant to grow old? Then you found no one here but Ines?”

“Not a soul. Where is your father?”

“Gone to bed, poor dear. He could not keep awake any longer. It would have been an iniquity to try to make him sit up. He’ll see you to-morrow. And I am tired to death. But you two—you both look quite fresh. Yet Ines must be as tired as I am.”

“I am not tired,” said I; and, indeed, I had never felt fatigue further away from me.

We all sat down then, despite Elisabeth's weariness, she and I side by side upon the sofa, and Felix opposite to us in a chair. I left them to do the talking. I had nothing to say. Elisabeth had a thousand questions to ask. How long was he in Baltimore? To that he replied that he was not singing there any more just at present. His manager said that not half the people had yet returned from the sea and mountain resorts, to which they fled from the summer heats. Winter—the depth of winter—was the proper social season in this city. He was not sorry for this. He had declined to make any engagements at all for the next fortnight. He would go with us wherever we liked. It was still hot, but he was so pleased with this semi-southern town, and with the people he had met in and about it, that he was loath to leave the neighbourhood.

“But the question of pelf?” began Elisabeth.

“Pelf be hanged! I have been studying that question ever since I came here. Yes, Ines, I have, in spite of your look when I say so. Now you are here, all of you, let us forget filthy lucre for a time, and go in for enjoying ourselves.”

“And Brian Holgate?” said she.

Felix smiled. “Brian Holgate has been quite a success,” said he; “at any rate, so far as I am concerned. I mean, I made a good bargain, whatever he did. No man ever had a more devoted retainer than I have found in him. He is almost painfully conscientious in the discharge of his duties, and he has such tact and feeling, you know; it is quite wonderful. His friend Alice said I should not repent bringing him, and she was right. But there’s something about the lad’s manner

which is not quite satisfactory to me after all—a sort of smouldering look in his eyes sometimes, and a mechanical way of going about his business. What nonsense, is it not, Ines ? ” he finished, suddenly turning and speaking quickly to me.

“ It is very interesting,” said I, with a deep sigh. “ I am glad he is grateful.”

“ Will he be with us ? ” asked Elisabeth.

“ Not all the time. He has some friends of his own. But you won’t object to his coming now and then, will you ? ”

“ Felix—no ! Only where are we going ? We haven’t heard that yet.”

“ Well, I have made a plan. I don’t know how you will like it. Instead of rushing you round to all sorts of show places, I thought it would be pleasant to go off quietly somewhere and stay. It will be lovely now at Front Royal, in Virginia. Some people whom I know and

like very much live down there. They would put us all up, if we would go, but we won't tax their hospitality to that extent. There's a very fair inn, of an old-fashioned kind, not far away from their place. Not so fine, perhaps, as one at Saratoga, or Newport, or Narraganset, but much more interesting. The country is splendid, and the autumn will be delicious. Shall we go, say the day after to-morrow, when you have looked about here a little, and be as idle as we please down there?"

"What do you say, Ines?" she asked kindly, laying her hand on mine.

"I think it would be delightful," I replied, earnestly and honestly.

"Just lovely," Felix amended my words. "Very well. *Soit!* Meantime, you must go to bed, and awake rested and refreshed. To-morrow I will show you what there is

to be seen in this city, and the day after we'll be off."

He rose, and so did we.

"Do you mean," asked Elisabeth, suddenly, "that there was no one to listen to your singing to-night?"

"No, I don't mean that. There were plenty of people—most excitable and appreciative people; but—oh! I shall be glad to get away from it for a time; and I can finish here some day, when you are all travelling somewhere else."

We separated, and I went to my room, feeling sleep very far from me indeed. For hours I lay awake, hardly hearing the sounds which arose from the street below through my open window, for, as Felix had said, some part of the population did not seem to go to bed at all, and on this warm, scented night of Indian summer, I think there was scarce an hour's

silence throughout. But I heeded not the disturbance. My thoughts were far otherwise occupied. The voyage, and even our arrival, seemed swept clean from my mind. All I could think of was—this, then, is our meeting, after two years' absence! So changed—so changed. "*How* you are changed!" Yes, it was indeed true. I felt it sweep across me with an overwhelming sense of conviction. I realized it; that was not the same thing as knowing it. Was I actually the same being who had taken leave of him—no, of whom he had taken leave—that afternoon in Madame Prénat's drawing-room? No. He was just the same, as I saw. Not a line, not a glance, not a tone of his voice had altered; but I—I was pacing restlessly up and down my room. Suddenly I stopped, and laid my hand over my heart, trying to still its ache; and I

said to myself, not in so many words but deep down in my mind, that I had grown into a woman, with emotions, with capabilities of love and hatred, of pain and passion, so strong that I feared to let them fully reveal themselves, even to myself. And now, as before, with the woman as with the girl, it was the same thing—the man who had been the idol of my childish heart, and the hero of my schoolgirl enthusiasms, was the same man before whom my woman's soul bowed, that so it would be always—he, and no other. I felt, too, with this developed strength of love and worship had come also strength of will. My secret was mine. It should remain mine. I would be mistress of myself and of my feelings during this time that we were to be together. And after it was all over, and I was back again in London, there would

always be—Madame Prénat and the Professor. As I came to that conclusion, I smiled a little to myself, but the calm brought by my resolution remained with me.

CHAPTER II.

COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

I DID not forget the letter which I had promised Maurice to deliver into Felix's own hands. But I admit that I delayed giving it to him—delayed opening up the conversation to which its production must necessarily give rise. I did not feel, during the two or three days of our sojourn in Baltimore, that there was any reasonable opportunity of bringing it out. Our time was filled to overflowing with sight-seeing, driving, sailing down the bay, visiting Annapolis and Mount Vernon, and with other amusements. I could not persuade myself to intrude my affairs into the

midst of it all. Elisabeth, I have reason now to think, knew very well what my state of mind was. At any rate, she knew of my promise to Maurice about the letter, and she gave neither word nor sign on the subject. From Baltimore we moved on to Washington, and spent a night and nearly two days there; we had introductions, and we were busy and engaged the whole time.

But at last all this was over. We had, by means of train and "stage," got conveyed to the place Felix was so anxious for us to go to, and in a very short time we felt perfectly at home, as if we had been there for months; and the life of utter laziness, of which he had spoken with such enthusiasm, began. Very much we all liked it. It was truly delicious, this basking for hours at a time under the shade of the sunny piazza which ran

all round the house. As the sun moved, so moved we, keeping ourselves in the shade, and as much as possible out of the reach of mosquitoes. We talked and laughed and read, and had a good time of it generally. There we could sit and look forth into the dim blue distance towards the south ;

“ O magnet south ; O glistening, perfumed south,” so full of witchery and attraction. A golden mist shimmered over all the fertile land ; the great blue mountains rose quite near to us, and, nearer still, wooded hills, with here and there the “ gaps,” as they called them, which let us see into the distance I have mentioned. Quite near was an old house, where those friends of Felix’s lived of whom he had spoken to us—an old house haunted with memories and associations, tragic, comic, pathetic, for those who knew. We were often

there, and learnt what Virginian hospitality meant. Occasionally, under the impression that it was not quite so hot as usual, we summoned up energy enough to hire some kind of a rough native carriage or "stage" and team, and under flapping canvas covers drove to some place of interest—battle-field or other historic spot, anywhere within a range of twenty miles. Every inch of this ground had been fought for—generally more than once—savagely, fiercely, tenaciously fought for; and though we all conceded the right to the North in that struggle, I think our fancy and imaginations were captives to this South. Certainly, our affections were engaged by the people we met there; and we revelled in the calm and yet novel pleasures of the life we led amongst these, to us, strange surroundings. Interviewers did not penetrate there; indeed, as Felix thankfully

acknowledged, his battles with them were over. The novelty of his appearance had worn off, and he would know them no more, until they flocked around him on his departure, to ask what he thought of them and their great country. We had no interviewers, but we had concerts and dancing, and games and amusements in abundance, in the "parlours" of the hotel, greatly assisted therein by sundry dark-eyed and fascinating Virginian and Carolinian maidens and young matrons, with the mankind belonging to them—an abject, but thoroughly happy race, the latter appeared to be. It was all new, bright, very sweet and delightful, and I delayed in a cowardly manner the giving of the letter, till a day came when my conscience smote me, and I could put it off no longer—a day, in fact, on which I myself received a letter from Maurice, in which he told me

he had been thinking every day of my promise ; that he supposed long ere this his letter was in Mr. Arkwright's hands ; perhaps even a reply to it on its way to him. Then I felt, with shame and mortification, that I had behaved badly, and must at once amend.

But I lacked the courage, for all my confidence in my own strength of will, to go to Felix and straightway demand an interview with him. In fact, his manner, as I interpreted it, had hardly been encouraging to such a course. I could no longer complain that he treated me as a child : he treated me as a very grown-up person indeed, with a gravity and a ceremony which irked and embarrassed me, and made me very decidedly afraid to attack him with this precious piece of business of mine.

I resorted to my usual counsellor, Elisa-

beth, and confided the state of things to her.

“I ought to have given him the letter before,” said I. “I must do it to-day. I feel as if I couldn’t wait another hour.”

“Well, child, give it to him, then.”

“But I have more to do than that,” said I, wishing she would see how serious a business it was. “I shall have to tell him my ideas about Maurice, and hear his.”

“Yes, certainly.” Elisabeth’s eyes were veiled from my sight, her hands trifled with a lace scarf that lay across her knee. The slightest possible twitch at the corners of her mouth made me wonder what she thought of it all. “Yes, you must settle all that. You must do it to-day. If you like, I will tell him that you want to speak to him.”

“Oh, if you would!” I cried fervently.

“And if I were only sure I should speak sense!”

“Oh yes. Why not? You have to a certain extent a ‘level head,’ my dear. Did I tell you of that Yankee who was talking to me yesterday, and told me of a flighty friend of his who had a ‘vurry lovely, level-headed wife,’ who very often kept him straight?”

“Oh, dear, how absurd!” I said, unable to relish the joke properly in my anxiety.

We were alone in our sitting-room—a spacious upstairs room, with three doors, leading respectively into Elisabeth’s and my bedrooms, and into the passage, or “hall,” as they always called it. It was five o’clock in the afternoon, and, almost as we finished speaking, the door was opened and Felix himself came in.

“Oh!” said he, pausing and looking at us. I was standing; Elisabeth was seated.

I had by now begun to be accustomed, if not reconciled, to the gravity of his look when it rested upon me. I could not help feeling, sometimes, as if it amounted to coldness. On this particular occasion his eyes fell directly upon me, and I felt a chill of depression seize me, for it seemed to me as if that look were colder than I had ever seen it before. Though I had told Elisabeth that I felt as if I could not wait another hour, yet I was somewhat dismayed when she, with the prompt and cheerful manner of one who is arranging something disagreeable to be done by some one else, said briskly—

“Felix—the very person who is wanted. Ines is anxious for a business interview with you. She is the bearer of an important document for your perusal, and she wishes your advice thereupon.”

“A document—an interview? I am

quite at your service," said he, very coldly, it seemed to me, and my heart sank lower.

"Then I'll leave you," said Elisabeth. "I promised Mrs. van Bibber to go to her room about this time. *Au revoir.*"

She rose, looked at us both with a benevolent smile, waved her hand and her lace scarf, and was gone.

Felix pulled a chair forward for me.

"Well, Ines?"

"I must get the letter. Wait one moment," said I, retreating into my room for the document. Alas! it was all too easily accessible. I could not keep him waiting. I was back again in an instant.

"What letter is it?" he asked me politely, but not very enthusiastically.

How bored he was, I felt, by the whole business. And how I hated to bore him! Courage, then, and get it over as quickly as possible.

“It is a letter which Maurice Grey, my cousin, gave me for you—at least, he said he was going to write to you, and I offered to bring it and deliver it to you. Here it is.”

I stretched out my hand, and he took the letter very slowly, and looked at it without opening it.

“To deliver it at your own time, it seems,” he said, with a slight smile.

“I often thought of it, but I was so afraid of teasing you with it,” said I, choking down my confusion, and speaking drily and steadily.

“Well,” he said, still not opening it, as he looked at me, “Lisa has told me something about this, Ines. I suppose I have known something about it for a good while. She says your cousin wants you to marry him.”

“He says so,” was my almost inaudible reply.

“She says, too, that you are—averse to doing so.”

“Yes,” I said; and wished I had the courage to look at him and say I would rather die than marry Maurice.

“H’m! And what have you against him?”

“There is nothing against him. It is only——”

“Only?”

“I don’t—love—him.”

“Oh! And you have told him so?”

“Yes.”

“And he is unreasonable enough to persist?”

“Yes. Oh, is it not unreasonable of him?” I cried, looking up excitedly. I met the same alien expression, not inviting to confidence, not offering comfort, and a slight smile as well, which cut me to the quick.

“Very unreasonable, no doubt,” he said, slowly breaking the seal of the letter. “But I think you should take into consideration that such unreasonableness betokens some force of character and power of will; and you should also ask yourself whether your aversion is as rational as it appears to be strong.”

I did not speak. I could never give the real reason of my intense aversion to Maurice. I could only say I did not love him. He read the letter, slowly and carefully, and then, turning to me, asked me if I knew its contents.

“He told me he should write and ask you to use your influence for him.”

“In this he tells me exactly the state of his affairs, and that he has his grandfather’s consent if he can get yours. It is the letter of a man of mind and character.”

“Yes, he has mind and character.”

“And don’t you like mind and character?”

“Very much. I do not care for Maurice.”

“Yet I think you ought to consider it seriously.”

“I have considered it till I hate the name of it. Do you mean that you would be pleased if I married him?”

“I think you would have an unusually good prospect of happiness. There is nothing trivial or light about this letter. He writes from a firm purpose. I have never heard anything but good, very great good, of him. And it would unite you to your own people in the most satisfactory way.”

All this in the same grave, judicial, and impartial tones, as he tapped the letter on the table now and then, and having finished, looked at me, but not in a manner

that encouraged me to approach any nearer.

All at once, a wildly reckless feeling came over me. I felt as if it did not matter in the least what became of me. After all, who and what was I that I should look for happiness as for a right? My happiness consisted in the love and approval of Felix and of Elisabeth. It was not that I did not prize the good-will of others, but no good-will of others could make up for the loss of theirs. If Felix, in the face of my strongly-expressed aversion, could still urge me to consider this marriage well before refusing it, could persist in bidding me do so, had not one word to say as to any wish of his own in the matter, no sign to give whether he cared anything about it or not, what did it matter what I thought? He approved. After all, it was not only I who had

changed in these two years; he had become a stranger to me, he made a stranger of me. I did not feel angry or offended with him. I felt my heart aching over it all, grieving, expostulating with fate, not with him. His attitude in the matter shook my strong resolution to act independently. As I stood there, I felt my will waver somewhat.

“And do you think I ought to be united to my own people?” I asked, feeling that if the Greys were my own people, and he and Elisabeth were not, then the world was out of joint, and I had no clue whatever by which to guide my steps.

“Yes,” said he, slowly, “I think a great deal ought to be sacrificed to cement a union of that kind. I think it is hard on Mr. Grey for you to continuously hold aloof from him.”

(Just what Elisabeth had said.)

“But surely I could do a great deal that Mr. Grey wishes, without marrying Maurice.”

“Picture to yourself whether you would have a very comfortable time, trying to please Mr. Grey, and *not* married to Maurice!”

“And you would approve of it, and agree to it, if I were to marry him?”

Very slowly indeed he answered, and to each word my heart seemed to give an answering throb—

“It would be impossible for me to disapprove.”

“Then,” said I, without pausing an instant, “I had better accept him. Anything is less horrible than continual wrangling. I will go and do it at once.”

But I looked at him once again to ascertain if he really meant what he said, and my depression and wretchedness were only

deepened by the sight of his expression of bored and weary indifference. He leaned back in his chair, and threw his head back, passing his hand over his eyes and giving a deep sigh. Let it be my part to put an end to the scene as speedily as possible. As he did not reply to my last desperate words, I said, after a short pause—

“Will you wait just five minutes? I should like to settle it now. Do you mind? I am so sorry to give you so much trouble; but if I do it at once it will be done, and I shall not have to think so much about it.”

“I am at your service till you have settled everything to your satisfaction.”

“To *my* satisfaction!” I ejaculated, as I went past him towards my own room.

He rose as I passed his chair, and suddenly said to me—

“Ines!”

“Yes?”

My hand was on the door-handle and I wanted no delay, but I forced myself to turn and listen. There was so long a pause, that at last I looked again. I saw that his face had become quite pale, and he looked at me with an expression which I could not understand.

“I can only tell you what I think is for your good,” said he. “I offer no advice. You are not a child any more. A woman must decide this kind of thing for herself. Do not think I wish our—friendship to be at an end.”

I did not think that. I had more to say about it at another time; but the sudden return to a kindlier tone almost overpowered me. I took his hand, said earnestly, “I think that you are, as you always have been, kind and generous to

me." And, giving his hand a little shake, I went into my room, sat down at the writing-table, and in less than ten minutes rose up again.

During this short space of time I had recovered all my determination ; my mind had emerged from the tumult into which it had for a short time been cast. I had had time and strength to be—I felt it in my inmost heart—true to myself, to Maurice, and to Felix. That which a few moments ago had seemed so hopelessly entangled, had all at once become quite clear and simple.

I returned to the parlour, and found Felix sitting in the same chair he had been in throughout our interview. I walked up to him and held out the letter.

"That is what I have said to Maurice. Will you please read it?"

He took it reluctantly.

“Why should I read it? If you have accepted him—that is all I need to know.”

“Please, Monsieur Félix, will you read my letter?”

Then he read it slowly and deliberately, and I stood before him, waiting in some apprehension for his expression of displeasure to return. I did not mind it so much now, though. It would soon be over, the whole hateful business. But all my feelings had been, and in some respects still were, strung up to the highest pitch of tension, and I can hardly describe what I felt when, after he had read it at least twice through, I saw a broad smile come over his face—a smile which he tried to hide by putting his hand before his mouth. He said nothing for some time, but at last looked up at me.

The smile was gone from his lips, at any rate, but I could detect no displeasure in his expression.

“*Souvent femme varie,*” he remarked. “I don’t know whether I have read aright. If I have, I think you have played a practical joke upon me which I cannot condemn too strongly. At any rate, do me the favour to read this letter aloud to me. I want to find out whether my ears and my eyesight agree.” And he offered it to me.

“Oh no ; do not ask me to do that.”

“I don’t ask you ; I bid you. I am not a revengeful man, but no one likes to be made a complete fool of. I think that what I desire you to do, is a mild punishment for what *you* have done. Yes ; read it, please.

Unable to understand him, I took the letter, and in a small voice, and with a far

from impressive manner, read aloud what I had written :—

“ ‘ DEAR MAURICE,

“ ‘ I have only to-day given your letter to Mr. Arkwright. You must pardon the seeming neglect. I have never forgotten it, but I had not a suitable opportunity before. He has read it and, as you expected, he has said a great deal for you. He would very strongly approve of my being engaged to you. But, with his usual kindness, he leaves me quite free to decide finally in the matter. I can only tell you what I have told you before—I cannot and I will not marry you. It would be to do you a wrong, and to make me miserable for life. I know it. Please consider this answer as final. I hope we shall always be friends, but I think we had better not meet each other for some time

to come. When I come home, I shall return to Professor Willoughby and my work with him. He says I never need be afraid of not finding plenty of employment with him or his friends. It is a life which will suit me exactly. I cannot do what you wish. Do not ask me again. If you should—I am sorry to seem hard, but it is the best—I shall not answer you.

“ ‘Your cousin,

“ ‘INES GREY.’ ”

“ Ah,” said he, when I had finished, “ I was not wandering, then, in my mind, after all. But it still appears almost incredible to me. I always had an idea that you were a person to be depended upon—not so wonderfully changeable as all that. What, in heaven’s name, made you veer round from north to south, so to speak, in less than ten minutes ? ”

“When you spoke,” said I, “I felt very unhappy. I thought I saw that you would be glad if I would be sensible and make things easy for every one; that I was a trouble to you, as I have been a trouble to myself, since this began. But when I had sat down to write, I remembered what I have said in the letter—that it would be to do a wrong to him and to make me a miserable woman. And I remembered your own words to me,” I added steadily. “Perhaps you have forgotten them, but I never have: ‘Walk straight,’ you said, ‘and you’ll come out all right in the end.’ I should not have been walking straight if I had done that, and I should have had to walk crooked all the rest of my life, too. So I knew all in a moment what was the right thing to do, and I did it.”

I stopped, out of breath from this long

harangue, and feeling my heart grow lighter every moment.

“Very well argued!” said he, and there was less constraint in his tones, too. “I will grant you all that. I don’t want you to marry the lad to be miserable. But, as you have plenty of arguments of your own against him, it was but fair that I should give you some in his favour. I see, however, you are not to be moved. So, when you get home again, you propose to leave me, and set up for yourself?”

“If that is how you put it.”

“That is how I put it, and it seems to me it is the correct way, too. But I think you have forgotten one or two things. You are only just over nineteen—not your own mistress, therefore, for nearly two more years. Suppose I forbade you to do any such thing?”

“You won’t forbid me.”

“And why not?”

“Because you are not a tyrant, and you don’t want me to be unhappy.”

“And you would be unhappy if I said I wished things to go on for some time longer just as they always have done?”

“That would show you to be more changeable than you thought I was. Ten minutes ago you wished me to marry Maurice. How could you, at the same time, wish things to go on as they always have done?”

“That is certainly one for you. It seems to me that the Professor has been teaching you to chop logic, amongst other accomplishments. No, I do not wish you to be unhappy; nor do I desire to tyrannize over you. But perhaps you will allow me a shred or two of authority still; and I say, quite seriously, that you must not make these important plans in such a hurry.”

“Ah, Monsieur Félix, it is not in a hurry. I have been thinking about them for a long time. I have had to think about them. How could I tell you anything when I was strictly forbidden to write or even send a message to you?”

“Child, I do not blame you. I think you have come out of it well. There is time enough before us now in which to discuss the future. Another time we will speak of it. Meanwhile, do not arrange everything in your own mind on the implicit idea that I want to get rid of you as quickly as possible. And give me that letter. I will write to your cousin, and can enclose it in mine.”

“Do you think,” I said, with some embarrassment, “that he would like the idea of your having read it, when I——”

“When you speak so plainly to him? He must take the risk of that. He chose

to drag me into the matter; he cannot complain if I know all about it."

I handed it to him, and took courage to ask, "Then, though you would have approved of my accepting him, you are not displeased that I have refused him?"

"No, Ines, I am not displeased," he said slowly, and smiling, though he did not look at me. "But, at the same time, I think it as well to make sure that that very letter goes to him, and not some other. You might change your mind again between now and the mail."

"Oh, if I could but explain that I have never changed my *mind*! I got discouraged only for a moment, when I saw that you were so vexed and bothered by the whole business."

"I see. Well, we have said enough about this. It is decided that you do not marry your cousin Maurice, and that for

the present you put out of your head all thoughts but those of how best to amuse and enjoy yourself. Do you understand?"

"I can't enjoy myself when I feel I have done something that you don't approve of."

"Then rest assured that I do approve—*entirely*—of what you have done," he said with much emphasis. And with that he rose. "Lisa, I suppose, is safely gossiping with Mrs. van Bibber," he observed, and I was surprised at his accurate memory in the matter. "It is now much cooler than it was; suppose you put on your hat and walk with me up the hill to meet the stage. I expect Brian Holgate in this evening, with all my official correspondence. I must not keep up this idle life for ever."

Gladly I got my broad flat hat, threw a light shawl over my arm, and we set out together. We did not converse very

volubly, but from something I could not have defined in his voice, manner, expression—everything—I gathered the comforting assurance that he did approve of what I had done ; and my heart was lighter than it had been for many a day.

CHAPTER III.

ELISABETH'S MISSION.

FELIX had said to Ines that he expected Brian Holgate by the mountain "stage," and he duly arrived, bearing with him the looked-for budget of letters, especially one from Felix's business manager, sketching out a plan of campaign for the coming weeks. This worthy, the manager, was anxious for his client to be at work again. He saw good money, and plenty of it, thrown away in every day of holiday taken by the star whose affairs he was managing. But Felix refused that evening to do more than glance at the correspondence ; he promised Brian and himself

a hard morning's work on the morrow. After supper—for they supped in old-fashioned style at this old-fashioned Virginian hostelry—they sat out in great rocking-chairs within the almost dark piazza, and formed one or two groups. Felix had formally introduced the young man to Ines, and he took an opportunity of saying to her, in an undertone—

“Would you mind taking him in hand a bit, Ines? He is strange here just now, and I want to speak to Elisabeth, if I can manage it.”

Brian was perfectly amazed to find how easy was conversation with this silent, haughty-looking girl, whose presence he had been secretly deprecating to himself. He could always get on with Felix; he feared not old Mr. Reichardt, and he had a lively recollection of Elisabeth's kindness to him, with a conviction that she would

not withhold it in these different circumstances. But he had instinctively shrunk into his shell before the young lady ; and at first, when he found they were left alone, his impulse had been to take a solitary stroll in the woods with his pipe. He was, however, enabled easily to answer her first question.

“And have you been with Mr. Arkwright all the time he has been in America ?”

“Yes ; I came with him.”

“And you have travelled with him, and gone with him everywhere ?”

“Yes, everywhere.”

“Tell me about it,” she commanded him, in a gentle but decided tone. And with that she leaned back in her chair, swayed herself to and fro with a light touch on the ground of one little slippered foot, as everybody did there, and, resting

one elbow on the broad arm, like a shelf, of her rocking-chair, and her cheek on her hand, as he dimly saw in the darkness, she quietly waited for him to begin.

Without more ado, Brian did begin, and he told the story from beginning to end. It took a long time ; but he had an attentive auditor, who made few comments, though asking many questions.

At the other end of the verandah, sat Elisabeth, Felix, and Mr. Reichardt.

“ Well, Lisa, you haven’t asked me how our interview went off.”

“ Your interview ? ” she said, with well-feigned abstraction. “ Oh, with the child, this afternoon ! ”

“ I don’t know why you persist in calling her a child. She is the most grown-up and the clearest-headed child it has been my fate to meet for a long time.”

"Fortunate for her. What did you decide?"

"That she is not to be tortured by the youngster any more."

"I fancy she had decided that some time ago."

"Well, she was quite right. We got it settled. She wrote a letter to him, which I am to inclose with one from myself, to-morrow."

"Oh!"

"You don't seem to take any interest in it."

"Oh yes! I am glad it is all settled. I shall always be interested in Ines. But I'm mourning over your short memory. It was you who scoffed at all my ideas. It was you who said she was a child, and nothing but a child. And now you turn round upon me, and reproach me for doing the same thing."

“ You forget I have not seen her for two years.”

“ Oh no, I don't; not a bit. And she is just what I always thought she would be.”

“ She is not in the least what I thought she would be.”

“ Candidly speaking, did you ever think much about it? But in what way does she differ ? ”

“ She is so still, and pale, and proud. I suppose the ‘ tall white lily ’ simile is a hackneyed one, but it is true of her. And she has such brains. She has brains in her eyes. She—I don't know what to say to her sometimes.”

“ In such a case it is safest to say nothing. That is what I should advise. How much longer do you think of staying here, Felix ? ”

“ I haven't thought about it. When I have gone over my batch of correspondence

to-morrow, with Holgate, I shall know better."

The morrow's business investigation decided him to leave in a few days from that time. The others went southwards to see some places of interest, and were to join him later at Washington for some concerts. They did this, and all proceeded together further north.

It was during this time—between the middle of November and the end of the year—that a firm friendship became established between Brian Holgate and Elisabeth. As has been related, the grudge which she had felt against the young man, on first learning Felix's intention of taking him with him, had all melted away, even before the two men had set sail. She was by nature of an even, cheerful temperament, which, while it might run into great enthusiasms, seldom sank into depression,

and never into querulousness. But a sad heart or story always brought out her deepest feelings of sympathy and her strongest desire for helpfulness. At this time, too, as Elisabeth very plainly saw, with a quiet smile to herself, Brian was not likely to get very much attention from, at any rate, two other members of the party. She thought he looked lonesome and sad, and proceeded to see if she could not improve matters for him. It was not very long before she was in his confidence, as she usually was in that of any one when she wished it. She found what she had thought, that Brian's feelings were in anything but a soothed, or healed, or healthy state. He had got away from the conditions which had so crushed him; he had, as it were, found breathing-space—a place in which to pause and look round him. But that was all. He thought Felix had

behaved with incredible kindness to him, for he had a great idea that he was a troublesome and depressing person with his woes and misfortunes. And he adored his employer for his kindness—kindness which came so easily to Felix Arkwright, sweet-tempered and successful, that it would have been far more troublesome to him to be unkind, or to find fault, even where everything was not absolute perfection. It was far easier to Felix to say, “Poor beggar!” and make allowances, than to be carping and dissatisfied. The kindness was easy enough and, in its way, delicate enough. It had consisted in treating Brian on terms of absolute equality, but with the somewhat protecting attitude of an older man towards a younger one for whom he has a liking. With Brian it had been from the first a matter of honour to do all he could to help Felix,

and as he had naturally any amount of tact and ability, he quickly succeeded in his endeavour. Indeed, there was little need to fear rocks ahead in a progress like that of so popular and great an artist. The chief difficulty which ever confronted them was that of choosing amongst several offers, all equally good. This, with some skill and *finesse* in the art of keeping off bores, beggars, and "cranks" (a word whose value they both soon learnt to appreciate), and sundry too ardent specimens of appreciation of the opposite sex without introductions, formed the main part of Brian's duties, and he soon became a past master in the performance of them.

By way of reward, if reward were needed, he had the *entrée* into most of the society which Felix himself frequented. He had unusual opportunities for studying men, women, and things, in this new world, and,

in a certain way, he made great use of it all. He was as adaptive and receptive as a clever, observant woman, and in a very short time he had quietly taken on a polish which differentiated him considerably from the Brian Holgate who had set out more than a year ago. Felix was willing to give him any number of hints as regarded his singing, and, taking a genuine interest in him, put it to him whether he had not better, now that the chance was open, embrace a professional career, offering at the same time to use all his influence to forward him. He thought it would open up a new life to the lad after his misfortunes, and he anticipated success for him, though he told him with kindly candour that he could not hope ever to reach quite the first rank among artists : he had been an amateur too long ; he had not young enough entered upon the thorny path of

probation which leads to success. Felix could not quite understand why Brian, though overwhelmed with gratitude at the offer, would not accept it, simply saying, when pressed for an explanation—

“My spirit seems to have gone.”

His grief, his disaster, had gone deeper with him than Felix, busy as he was with his own concerns, understood. Brian felt as if he should never uplift his voice in song any more. He had his violin with him, but it lay in its case at the bottom of his trunk—neglected. Would it ever speak for him again, sing for him, whisper for him, sigh for him, as in former days it had so often done? Perhaps, some time; but not now. It made him tremble to think of touching it. But he could not tell this to Felix. He could not explain the complex emotions which combined to make it a sheer impossibility for him to

think of coming forward—the wounded animal instinct, which makes for cover and solitude. So, with all his admiration for Felix, and with all Felix's kindly feelings for him, they remained apart. The man of twenty-five, inexperienced in the world as he was, had passed through a furnace which had never so much as scorched the skin of the other. Body and soul he had passed through it, and was inwardly seared and scarred almost beyond recognition.

As the year went by, he gained calmness and a kind of strength—the strength to endure the loss of joy and hope, without showing it. But it was not till Elisabeth Reichardt appeared upon the scene that he began to feel the warmth of the red glow of sympathy. Then it was that he first felt the ice and snow thawing, which, in spite of his outward composure, had

hitherto bound his heart fast and firm to the rock of its woe. She soon found how to make him talk to her. He was full of gratitude to her. He told her his whole story—the history of his childhood and boyhood and young manhood. As in a mirror she saw it all; and up to the time of his meeting Lucy Barraclough, shortly after she had left school and come to keep her father's house, it was a pleasant story enough, despite the absurdity of the treatment to which he had been subjected by his over-ignorant parents, on which treatment he touched lightly, with an indulgent smile. There had been all the homely joys and pleasures, friends and acquaintances, his playmates, Alice and Andrew, at the farm, and their growing up together faithful comrades. And there was his deep love for his old home, of which he told her a great deal. He

seemed better able to dwell on that than on some other things.

“It was bonny,” he said one day. “This country, wherever I go, looks so weary and large and burnt up, in comparison with that place. Their big rivers are grand, and their big lakes are like seas, and their big prairies are like deserts, but there’s no spot in all America that I’ve seen, fine and grand though it be, that could ever seem as bonny to me as that lane leading past my house towards Thornton; and there’s none of their Rocky Mountains to equal that view of Ravenside from the lane between the fields, a little further on. Eh!” he added, in Lancashire parlance, “eh, but it was fine, Mrs. Reichardt, that long curving swell, and the great square head of it, looking up to the north-east, as grim, I used to think, as the north-east itself. All colours I’ve seen it, from pale

silver-gray, more like a mist against the sky than a mountain on the earth, up to a blue that was black, and a blackness that was like ink. I used to feel as if it was mine, my very own ; and so, in a way, it was. But I shall never feel that again. It's the land of witchcraft ; I was bewitched—bewitched away from it all into exile."

She tried hard to make him take another view of the case, and feel it possible that some time he might return and make it all good, and be a dweller in his own land once more. She threw out the most subtle, filmy, and delicate kind of hints about Alice—feelers so fine that they were scarce perceptible save by the frequency of their appearance. That was all in vain. He shook his head and spoke of Alice in a way which caused Elisabeth to cease her hints, lest she should give him an inkling of the girl's feelings for him, for it was

quite obvious that he had none for her, save of the purest friendship and esteem. Though she succeeded in making him both feel and look more brightly on the present, and in the view he took of his immediate surroundings, yet she never succeeded in shaking his firm conviction that the past was the past, dead and buried, never to be connected by even the slightest link with the future ; that the "exile," as he called it, was final, and his life, to use his own expression, "broken in two." She did not combat this view too strongly. Elisabeth knew that there are natures and natures, and she began to understand somewhat more correctly what Brian's nature was. She dared not contradict him when he told her, as he did frequently, that there are lives which are spoilt, though not extinguished, by circumstances, and that such a life was his. As he very truly

said once, before she had ceased to dispute with him on the point, the lives that meet with this fate usually meet with it early. That is in the nature of things. It comes while there are still loves and hates which can be all in all to them. So it had been with him.

With this state of friendship gradually growing up between them, and with many an interlude of pleasure, excitement, and amusement, they toured about from one place to another. And as Brian, thawing under the delicate influence of womanly sympathy, became more expansive and confidential, Ines Grey, as Elisabeth observed, but without uneasiness, became less so. She had indeed lost all childishness. With all her pride, there had been, hitherto, a naïve simplicity, an outspoken frankness about her, which had clearly marked her as still a girl, and a

very young girl. That was gone. She was quiet, sedate, composed. No tremor of voice, no wavering of her glance nor unruly colour on her cheek, betrayed to any outsider that her inner state was less tranquil and unmoved than her outer one. She talked less to Elisabeth, but never came near her without the same smile of perfect trust and confidence, which to the elder woman was so sweet. The touch of her hand, the sound of her voice, the tenderness of her caress, were exactly the same. It was only Elisabeth who knew, whatever one other might sometimes suspect, that they covered a struggle, a passion, and a resolute endurance of what she felt to be a sharp ordeal, which things were making of the dainty, fragile girl, a strong and gracious woman. Her true nature came out in this crisis. The love which had so long, half unknown to herself,

been in her heart for Felix, was the love that strengthens—strengthens whether it be ever returned and acknowledged or not, because it was based on an utterly unselfish foundation. Sometimes Elisabeth's heart was a little uneasy. "What," she asked herself, "if, after all, he should let the prize slip, the richest and the greatest that has ever been within his grasp? What if her immovable calm should deceive him, as it must deceive all but me? and his pride, and the recollection of his long authority over her, should deter him from risking a refusal? He might never know what he had missed; but she—no!" Elisabeth decided within herself, "I will never be pessimist enough to give that idea a single thought. It shall not be so."

For she had no clue from him. His propensity, just after their arrival, to talk to her about Ines, seemed to have died

away. He was as silent to his old friend as was the girl herself. But she, by nature and by experience, versed in hearts and their stories, did not resent this. Only to her father-in-law did she sometimes breathe a hint of her ideas upon the subject. "Matchmaker!" he answered her, smiling. But she knew that he would have endorsed her whole course of action in the matter.

In the middle of December, when it had suddenly turned piercingly cold, they found themselves in Philadelphia, where a brilliant series of musical entertainments was to take place. The Quaker city is great at anniversaries, centenaries, inaugural ceremonies, and other functions; and it was in honour of some such prolonged festivities that the performances for which Felix was engaged were to be given. There were to be concerts, both morning and evening

ones, and several isolated acts or scenes from certain operas in which he had made his mark, and it was likely that these entertainments, together with others in the neighbourhood, would keep them in Philadelphia for some three weeks. The Quaker city, besides her first-mentioned propensity, likes, as well as another, any taste of the good things of this world, in the shape of art, beauty, or talent, when successful; and she welcomed with open arms the world-famed artist. Despite innumerable offers of hospitality of the most generous description, Felix found himself best suited by putting up at a hotel, and the rest of the party were in the same house.

One evening, almost immediately after their arrival, Elisabeth, feeling somewhat tired, had decided to remain at home, and let her father-in-law chaperon Ines to a

great reception at which Felix also was to be present. For aught she knew, Brian too would sooner or later go, he having received an invitation along with the others.

But while she sat alone, her book hanging idly from her hand, he suddenly came into the room, with so strange and excited a look in his eyes, so breathless an expression, that she was startled, and looked at him in silence for a moment. Then, seeing that no ordinary matter must have caused the look—

“Brian, what is it?” she asked him, half rising.

“Mrs. Reichardt,” he gasped, going up to her, and looking at her in the same fixed and startled manner, “I’ve seen her. I’ve seen Lucy. She is here—in this house.”

CHAPTER IV.

AT THORNTON.

"SEEN Lucy!" repeated Elisabeth, almost stunned by his statement; and then, collecting herself, "Is that possible? Surely you must have deceived yourself."

"I saw her," he repeated, his face quite white—"I saw her with a woman who looked like a servant or a nurse. They were going together to the elevator, and she was leaning on the woman's arm. They got in, and I saw her no more."

"It is quite easy to find out," said she, convinced that he was mistaken, and wishing to calm him. "Go down to the bureau, and look at the visitors' book."

Without a word he turned on his heel and left the room. In about five minutes he returned.

“Last night,” he said, “they came. “Mr. and Mrs. Richard Law, Hollowley, Lancashire, England.”

He sat down and looked at her, and Elisabeth knew not what to say to him.

“Oh, she looked ill. There is something very wrong with her,” he said at last, more as if speaking to himself than to her.

“Perhaps,” suggested Elisabeth after a pause, “she has come for her health.”

“Perhaps,” he replied, in the same abstracted tone. “Whatever she may have come for, health is far from her.”

“Mr. Holgate, tell me; have you had no communication at all with any of your friends up there—at Thornton, I mean?”

“No,” said he. “I did not want them

to know anything about me. A few months ago I was able to send Alice back the money which she lent me when I—when I had to come away. But I just sent a draft on an Irkford bank, where I know they have an account. And I only said, on a slip of paper, ‘With heartfelt thanks from one who can never repay the kindness that went with this loan.’ I did not know—at least, I had not heard, that she was married—Lucy, I mean. I think I knew all the time,” he went on, “but I had not heard it ; no.”

“What *can* have brought her here ?” said Elisabeth, deeply interested, and with a wonder, too, as to how it would all end.

Brian made no answer. He seemed again to drop off into a reverie, and presently, with a deep sigh, but without speaking a word, he went quietly out of the room.

He had said that Lucy was with a woman who looked like a servant or nurse. This was true. It was a trained nurse who was with her; and Elisabeth had a maid with her—an old and confidential retainer. These two worthies, being both English—one a Lancashire, the other a Yorkshire woman—found each other out, either by freemasonry, or instinct, or clairvoyance, before they had been ten minutes in the same dining-room; and very soon each was in possession of all that the other could tell her, or invent for her, concerning her own particular employers and their affairs. Of course, only as much of this as was thought good by the abigails was related to their mistresses; and Lucy's nurse, knowing well the state her lady was in, told her simply nothing. Elisabeth's maid, Bolton, however, speedily informed her mistress of

quite as much as the latter needed to know on the subject—that Mr. and Mrs. Law had not been married a year; that Lucy had not been strong when the marriage took place; that, some months afterwards, she had been out driving, and had met with a slight accident, nothing in the least degree serious, but that her nerves must have been in a strange condition at the time, as she had never been able to get over this apparently trivial shock, but had from that day been strangely, sadly, and to those by whom she was surrounded, inexplicably ill. She had been not only weak in body, but in a most painfully perturbed condition mentally. She had been taken by her husband to see one or two well-known English physicians, all of whom agreed in saying that she had no organic disease, but that her nervous system was in a state of collapse; and

that, though there was little doubt of her final recovery, yet it must be long, very long, before such a serious disturbance could even begin to amend. And the last doctor had said that travel was excellent in such cases, especially when it included a sea voyage. When America was spoken of, he had said it was the very thing ; had recommended a great doctor in Philadelphia, who had gone deeper into these things, and had more experience in them, than any man living.

“ And so they’re here, ma’am. And just at the first she seemed to brighten up a bit, and wish to see what sort of a place she’d got to ; but it did her harm, and now she’s so tired and weak again, and cries so dreadfully, that they have to keep her quiet. Poor lady, she must be in a bad way, from what they say ; and so young—only just over one and twenty ! ”

This information Elisabeth gradually communicated to Brian, for she saw that his thoughts were constantly busied with Lucy, his whole mental being in a state of unrest, and that he spent a great part of his spare time in hanging about in the halls and corridors of the hotel, in the hope of once more catching some such glimpse of her as he had had on that evening when he had first seen her.

But he was not rewarded. All that Brian saw on one or two occasions, was Law himself, looking much as he always had done in Brian's recollection. At these times Brian always shrank away, and made himself invisible, not from any fear or timidity, but because he could not trust himself to encounter the glance of the other man, lest he should suddenly become beside himself, spring upon him, and do him some injury.

It is necessary to give some few details as to the chain of events, at the end of which she who had been Lucy Barraclough came at last to be under the same roof with Brian Holgate.

After that miserable scene at Jessamine Lawn, in which he had cursed her falsehood and herself, and with scorn which had penetrated even the thick skins of Jim Barraclough and Richard Law, had left the three together, to digest his words, Lucy had, in a dead silence of the other two, at last crawled away to her room and, locking the door, had flung herself upon her bed and lain there for a long time as one without life. Her mind had been active enough. Sleep was not for her on that night, nor, except in short, unrefreshing snatches, for many nights afterwards; and in the midst of her agony she had unwittingly discovered the profoundest

truth in regard to herself, when, after her long, motionless vigil, she had raised her face, haggard and drawn in the light of the expiring candles on her dressing-table, and there had escaped from her lips, in a kind of groan, "Oh, I am not strong enough to bear this."

She did not say, either aloud or to herself, "I have sinned, and I am punished;" nor did she take the view that it was she who had been altogether sinned against in the matter. Her moral sense and her sense of honour were not keen enough to realize the first; her regard for the two men who had struggled for her was about equal; she had not suffered in losing Brian; she cared not a straw for Law. But she had been pushed, and bent, and made to do what she hated, and it was too much for her. She was "not strong enough to bear this."

Such was the truth. She was not framed by nature to sustain any great weight of either grief or responsibility. Perhaps she could not have borne any great joy much better than any great sorrow or injury. It was not in her. So far, her youth, and immunity from active care and anxiety, had not forced upon her or others the knowledge of her weakness ; but now, pushed on by a nature stronger a hundred times than her own, to unscrupulous conduct, the long strain of acting against her inclinations, and under compulsion, had told upon her inadequate nervous system ; and the crash at the end, when she had been forced to play as odious a part as any in which a woman can figure, had crushed and overwhelmed her. She was not of the stuff which can sin, or be pitiless, or treacherous, on the one hand ; which can be strong and true, and im-

movably faithful on the other, can gain strength by its very actions to continue in them, and which does not break down. If Richard Law had known the girl's nature, he would perhaps have chosen some other method of making her his ; but how was he to know anything ? How was he to know that she was different from other women ? She looked just the same ; she moved, spoke, and acted like another woman. He did not suppose that her late experience had been exactly a pleasant one. He would have spared it her if he could ; but she would recover. It was better to get things of that sort over, and there had been literally no other means of getting that young fool out of the way. It would all settle down now, and he would find means of making her forget it ; for now that he had succeeded in doing what he wanted, he meant to be very kind to her.

After a little time Lucy did seem to forget it; at any rate, she never spoke of it. She was passive when Dicky came and said he wanted to know what was to prevent him from going to her father. She did not forbid him to do so; and he went and made a formal proposition to Mr. Barraclough for her hand.

Mr. Barraclough, after recovering from his surprise at finding that some one was "after" Lucy, gave a joyful consent, for Richard Law was a wealthy man even now, and there was every prospect that some time he would rise to be one of the magnates of money in those parts. Everything smiled upon Dicky in his wooing—except the object of his affections; she confined herself to this unsmilingness—she made no difficulty about accepting him.

Lucy's reasons for this passive acquiescence were diverse. First, she had

got an almost superstitious awe of Dicky's cleverness and of his power. He had so distinctly told her all that he meant to do, and then he had at once and deliberately gone and done it; without faltering, without swerving or making bungles or mistakes, he had done things which she had thought impossible of accomplishment. That was the first reason. The second was that, now the thing had been spoken of openly and was known by her father and brother, she knew that everything short of brute force would be employed to make her do as they wished; and she did not feel the capacity or the inclination to fight three strong men, who cared nothing for her feelings and everything for their own aggrandisement. Reason the third and last was, that the marriage would bring some variety into her life, some change of scene and surroundings,

which might perhaps make her feel a little less wretched than at present she felt.

“There is nothing to be feared except fear,” says some writer. Lucy had fallen, physically and mentally, into that condition in which fear finds easy entrance and an open door into the spirit’s recesses, but in which happier and saner emotions may knock in vain for admittance. Her fears, so far, had taken no tangible shape; they consisted more of a vague wish to get things settled, and to put an end to the old life. And this was effected by her marriage in the April following Brian’s departure. She was wedded, standing full in the beams of the monster golden-eye, to Richard Law, and left Jessamine Lawn for ever.

Her husband possessed a house much nearer to Hollowley, in the vicinity of his works, but at first he had determined to

make their chief residence at Moor Isles. He said he would not take Lucy away from her own people. In pursuance of this resolve, he prepared to have the place turned inside out ; all the old furniture, the simple old things which had been there for generations, were to be moved, and new æsthetic splendours to come in their stead. But before this could be carried out, Lucy had spoken ; she uttered her one fiat in opposition to his wishes.

“ I can’t live at Moor Isles,” she said ;
“ I’ll go to Hollowley.”

He expressed surprise, reasoned with her, but talked in vain.

“ You need not ask me to go there,” she said abruptly ; “ I won’t.”

So some furnishing and beautifying were done to the house in Hollowley, and Moor Isles was left as it had been. Dicky offered the post of caretaker to Mrs. Stott,

who, while unable to conceal her loathing and scorn for him and all appertaining to him, could, cat-like, not tear herself away from the spot while yet a chance remained to her of staying. She did stay, after telling Richard Law that she would never, as long as she lived, hold it to be the house and property of any other than Brian Holgate.

As a matter of fact, it was Brian's property, as Dicky of course knew. In a court of justice Dicky could never have substantiated any claim to it. But he knew also that as a debt of honour it was his, and that Brian would never claim it. In this capacity he took possession of it, arranging everything in his own methodical and systematic way. He was only enforcing his rights; he did not want to go beyond them, and he did not consider that those rights included possession of any

of the interior furnishings of the house, or any of its plate or pictures, so, laughing gently at Mrs. Stott's wrath; he told her that she would be undisturbed in the guardianship of these and other things, which for years had been the pride of her heart, until, he added with a slight sneer, such time as it should suit him to come and occupy, when both she and the things would have to make themselves scarce.

“And the day as you take possession, Richard Law, and drive out them as has lawful rights over this place, will be the same day as the Lord in heaven forgets as how He is a just God,” said the poor old woman, looking at him with some majesty in her rugged form and face—the majesty of righteous wrath.

“Oh, I know nothing about that,” he told her. “That's out of Mother Shipton's prophecies, or something as silly. You

remember what I've told you. I shall give you a look in every now and then, to see that my orders are carried out."

He left her quivering with rage, and yet filled with an almost hysterical joy at not having been forced to leave the old place after all.

How Sarah contrived to live was a mystery best understood by herself and Alice Ormerod. She had some small savings, but had not been very careful in the matter of hoarding, knowing—as she had fancied—that as long as Moor Isles stood, she would not be without a home. Law offered her no money; had he done so, she would have been more inclined to spit in his face than take it. Her wants were not numerous, her constitution was of the toughest, and Alice Ormerod lived over the way.

Poor Ferran lived between Moor Isles

and the farm. In the evenings he usually lay at Alice Ormerod's feet, till she touched his head softly and said, "Come, lad," opened the kitchen door, and bade him "hie away home," when he betook himself direct to the back door of Moor Isles. Sometimes, during that winter after Brian's departure, when the nights were long and dark, the younger woman would go across to "th' House," as they always called it, and sleep on a bed in Sarah Stott's room; for the poor old body had got a little timorous, and would recall to herself the many sad scenes which had taken place before the brightness of that house had been quenched, telling Alice she felt as if she heard footfalls, sighs, and sobbings, and that she feared ghosts.

So Brian Holgate's house knew him no more.

CHAPTER V.

LUCY.

IN April, as has been said, Lucy and Richard were married, and for a month or two all seemed, in a quiet way, to go well. It appeared as if she had recovered the balance which had for a brief season been disturbed, though she sometimes complained of not sleeping, and of a disagreeable, abnormal sensitiveness to sounds, which had in former days been unknown to her. Her father and brother said they never saw her unless they went to visit her; she was too lazy, they declared, to come all the way up the hill to

Thornton. And, indeed, she did not seem very fond of going there.

But one afternoon, rather late in the summer, though it was still hot and fine, she had for once been to her father's house. He was about to give a dinner-party to sundry business acquaintances of his own kind, and she had been requested to go and see the housekeeper, and decide certain knotty points in regard to the bill of fare.

She had not felt very bright as she drove there. The evening before, she had learnt from Dicky, in a casual kind of way, what an excellent joke (from his point of view) he had succeeded in playing upon her with regard to the lost bracelet, long ago. The bracelet he had given to her had been her own, which he had recovered without difficulty in the ball-room, had carried to a jeweller's to be put into a new

case and receive an extra burnish and gloss, and had then brought to her.

“I never said in so many words that it had been made new, you know,” he told her, laughing at the strange expression on her face. “All’s fair in love and war. If I’d given it you back and told you the simple truth, I should have lost my hold over you. Don’t you see,” he added, more urgently, as she did not respond with alacrity, “I wanted you so much, Lucy, and you were so perverse and so maddening. I believe I would have told lies for twenty-four hours at a stretch to get what I wanted.”

“Oh, I understand,” was all she had said. But she had passed a wakeful night.

This afternoon, she stayed as short a time as possible at her father’s house, got into her victoria, and was driven away. On the homeward way she soon came

opposite to the gates of Moor Isles and Ormerod's farm. Just as they were passing the latter, a couple of young cattle rushed tumultuously forth, pursued by the collie, vigorously working to drive them back again. Lucy's horses, with one accord, shied at the unexpected disturbance, and for a minute or two her coachman had some difficulty in keeping them from bolting down the hill, but he succeeded, in a very short time, in calming them. Glancing over his 'shoulder when this was accomplished, he was surprised to see his mistress lying back in her place, her eyes closed, her face white—evidently in a faint.

The faint was a long one. Before she recovered consciousness, she had to be lifted from her carriage and borne into one of the parlours at Moor Isles. When she opened her eyes at last, and began feebly to shudder, she found two women

standing near her, who had evidently been attending to her and applying remedies. After a minute or two she recognized them. They were Alice Ormerod and Sarah Stott.

After some time, but not until several hours had elapsed, her carriage came back, with her husband in it, for Alice had had presence of mind enough to send the coachman to fetch Law, and they took Lucy back to her own home. A scared look was on her face, a strange, indescribable fatigue in her eyes. The doctor was sent for, made many inquiries, examined carefully, and finally said that he could not pronounce in the matter. He could call it nothing but a case of nerves. There was nothing organically wrong; he had used every remedy he could think of. No one in ordinary health could possibly be affected in this way by so slight a shock; but Lucy denied having

been out of health up to now. On the whole, after a week's futile efforts to procure for his patient sleep by night or rest by day, he informed Dicky that he would like to have the advice of a specialist in such matters, to help his own knowledge.

Accordingly, a "specialist in such matters" was sent for from afar—a stout man, with a round face and an innocent-looking button of a mouth, which to the uninitiated eye did not promise much. But a certain expression in his eyes, and tone in his voice, speedily inspired respect. And he had a not unkindly expression.

At first it seemed as if everything would go right. He knew so much, understood so well, was never at fault for a moment. Even Dicky, the unimpressible, was impressed. "He makes Palmer look like a child," he said afterwards. This *savant* did something mysterious with gaslight

and glasses, through which he inspected Lucy's eyes, making no sign the while. Her appearance was just what it always had been, only for the terrible exhaustion, which seemed to go down in the eyes to infinite depths. But she had fever, turned with disgust from food, and when he questioned her as to her feelings, the same look of terror, uncontrollable and unlimited, crossed her face, and she said, almost in a whisper—

“I am sure I am going mad.”

Dicky's face blanched in turn. This was the first hint he had heard of the horrid idea. She had been very reserved with the Hollowley doctor, but the specialist seemed to inspire her with at least the confidence to tell him her worst fears.

“I am sure I am ; and I can't think of anything but myself and what my mind feels like,” she added.

The physician smiled in a superior manner.

“*Quite* a mistake, my dear madam. Your brain is organically sound. You are no more mad than I am. You are suffering from anæmia—cerebral anæmia it is, which paints everything in these black colours just at present. You have nothing to fear on that score. There is no danger to your life, and none to your reason.”

“I have done wrong,” said Lucy. “I have been very wicked, and I am going mad.” She turned her face aside, and burst into tears—into an agony of helpless, hopeless weeping, betokening, indeed, a functional weakness terrible to contemplate, but no insanity whatsoever.

Again the great specialist smiled.

“Doing wrong,” said he, “has nothing to do with this kind of thing. You might commit a murder and feel com-

paratively comfortable, with one sort of temperament. You may be faultless and suffer tortures, with another." But he looked at Dicky, and asked him, "Is there the slightest ground for what your wife says of herself, Mr. Law?"

"Not a jot," said Dicky, stoutly, and believed he was telling the truth. "Excepting that she yielded to me in letting something be done that she didn't quite like; that's all."

"I thought as much. But there has been mental strain along with it, considerable strain, evidently. That tells. On certain peculiarly constituted nervous temperaments it tells with most painful results, such as we see here. Mrs. Law"—he laid his hand kindly upon her shoulder, as she still lay weeping—"I can only assure you that you have nothing the matter with you that is not perfectly curable. You are

very ill—it is best to face facts—and you will not be well for a long time yet. But you *will* get well. You must have rest, absolute rest, of mind and body ; and food—I will give you my ideas about food,” he added, turning to the Hollowley doctor, while the amazed and anxious Dicky, to whom everything connected with “nerves” was a sealed book, stood by in astonishment, he being firmly convinced that what Lucy needed was what in his own mind he called a “strengthening mixture” of some sort.

Lucy turned round and said in a hopeless kind of voice—

“No one could suffer more than I am suffering, not the worst lunatic in all Bedlam.”

“No,” said the specialist readily, “that is quite true ; and from that very fact you must take consolation. [“Whew !” thought

Dicky.] You *know* just where you are different from what you have been a little while ago—a certain proof of your sanity. Don't fight so desperately with your painful sensations. Just say to yourself, 'They may do their worst, I shall get over it.' You are not going mad, whatever you may think. You suffer more, perhaps, than if you were. Rest, food, change, time, and no worry or anxiety—these must be your medicines ; there are no others for your illness. You have youth on your side and a constitution that is sound, if not robust. These will pull you through, you may rest assured."

She only wept on, hopelessly, helplessly. It was too much trouble to say that she would greatly have preferred sentence of death, and that no recovery could ever compensate for the tortures of fear, sleeplessness, depression, in the midst of which she was now living.

The specialist returned in the course of a week or ten days, but found scarcely any alteration in his patient. She was still living, still suffering, still hopeless and terrified, still perfectly and almost painfully sane in her intellectual processes, still feeling as if she would be, as she expressed it, "a raving maniac the next moment."

"Do you mean to say that my wife's brain is not weak?" Dicky asked him in private, after they had left Lucy's room. He felt angry with the man—the anger of ignorance and impotence.

"Physically it is—not intellectually."

This did not do Dicky much good, though he had a glimmering of what was meant.

"Her nerves have utterly given way," continued the physician. "And it is easier to say that than to set them up again."

“Nerves,” repeated Dicky, darkly; “if I had a nerve that lifted its head and dared to tell me that it had ‘given way,’ I’d so doctor that nerve that it should never complain again. That I would.”

The specialist suppressed a laugh of amusement, and merely remarked, *sotto voce*, as he shook his head, “*Gut gebrüllt, Löwe!*”

“What do you say?” asked Law. “Is that the name of her illness?”

“Oh no! The name of her illness—at least the name we give it at present, is neurasthenia. They have a great deal of it in America, and it’s from there that we get the best treatment for it—the most successful, so far, at any rate. What I say is, that you must get Mrs. Law away from here as soon as possible—slight changes at first, and then, as soon as she is able to bear it, greater ones. You had better

have a nurse for her. It will add to her comfort."

During the month or two that followed, Lucy had "little changes" from one place to another; had food, had rest, had a nurse; saw other physicians, but remained much the same. It was a London doctor who at last advised a voyage and, when Dicky suggested America, approved of the idea, recommending a great physician in Philadelphia, who was considered to have gone more deeply into these things than any other man in the world. So it came to pass that Dicky made arrangements as soon as he could for leaving his business for a time, and taking his wife and her nurse across the Atlantic, in the hope of speedily curing what time alone, if anything, could in any way ameliorate. Perhaps the specialists knew this. Perhaps they knew, too, that torture itself

may be lessened by the idea that one is doing something of an active nature to get rid of it. That the party found themselves in the same hotel with Felix and his friends, was nothing more than a not very startling coincidence.

CHAPTER VI.

“THEN GOOD-NIGHT, ALAS !”

THE details of this story were of course not known to any of the Arkwright party. All that they were acquainted with—and by “they” I mean chiefly Brian and Elisabeth, who alone took any active interest in the matter—was what Lucy’s nurse had told to Mrs. Reichardt’s maid. Through this functionary also they learned that Mrs. Law continued very ill indeed ; that, despite the confident predictions of the “specialist in these matters,” the voyage had produced no good effect upon her ; and that the great physician in Philadelphia, who had been at once consulted, had not

expressed himself so sanguinely as those at home. To Lucy herself he had said all that was cheering, but he had told Lucy's husband that her state was serious ; that her brain was so weak as to render any shock exceedingly dangerous to either her life or her reason ; but that, nevertheless, it was very bad for her to remain always shut up in herself. As she was unable to take any exercise without the most terrible bodily fatigue and mental depression resulting from it, he advised that she should be driven to his house instead of his going to see her. His chief hope for her recovery consisted in bringing her by slow degrees to get accustomed to little snatches of change and variety. As these accumulated, so, he trusted, would her power of bearing them, and her capacity for feeling an interest in something outside that ring of torture, her own morbid mental and

physical sensations. They had a small suite of rooms in the quietest part of the hotel, and there lived in a privacy as great as if they had been in their own house—perhaps even greater.

One day, about a fortnight after the Laws had arrived, and when Felix's engagement in Philadelphia was drawing to a close, there had been an afternoon concert at the Academy of Music, at which Felix had sung several times. He had excited the wildest delight and enthusiasm in his audience; and, feeling very good-natured for some reason which might be connected with the fact that Ines and Elisabeth sat near the front in full view of him, he had more than once consented to a recall. It was six o'clock before the concert was over. Joining his two friends, he drove back to the hotel with them in a close carriage. He had not to sing again that

night, but there were some arrangements to be made about the morrow.

“ I wonder where Holgate is,” he said, as they all went in ; and he sent in search of him ; but Brian was not to be found.

He (Brian) had accompanied the others to the concert, though he did not sit with them. He felt to-day a little less restless and unhappy than he had done yet since his knowledge of Lucy’s presence in the house. Something, some influence, he knew not what, seemed to lay a soothing hand on his weary spirit. The intense consciousness of Lucy’s sufferings was not so keenly burning in his mind as usual. He sat still in his corner, quite in the background, and listened with greater pleasure than usual, and with more attention than for a long time he had been able to give to anything of this kind. It was a

fine concert, and he enjoyed it until at last Felix, rising in compliance with an eager demand for a repetition, said two or three words to his accompanist, and began to sing the song which Brian had never forgotten—

“ Der Ernst hat mir bereifet des Hauses Dach
Doch warm ist's mir geblieben im Wohngemach,”
etc.—

Rückert's words to Schubert's music, which Felix had sung on the night that always seemed to Brian a hundred years ago, but was never to be forgotten, when he had visited Moor Isles, and soon after the singing of which song Lucy and her brother had marched into the room.

Dreamily and ideally beautiful now as then, and divinely sung by the great artist, it was more than the young man could bear to hear. After drinking-in a few bars, and feeling the pain of recollection

and longing rise to the keenest agony, he quietly arose, being near the door, and left the hall, noiselessly and unobserved. A passing wonder seized him, in the course of his torturing introspection. How was it that Felix Arkwright, who had never in his life suffered pains like these which had laid Brian low, had the power to produce tones, inflections, cadences of such piercing sweetness and pathos as to open up new depths of emotion and insight in the consciousness even of one who had suffered till he had almost succumbed to his suffering? Perhaps, after all, it was the sufferer himself who read into the music meanings which had not occurred to the artist.

He smiled a little to himself as towards the hotel he threaded his way along the gaily lighted Chestnut and Thirteenth Streets—streets filled with busy people

intent on their Christmas shopping, their friends, their amusements.

Oh, if Lucy could hear that song! But no, she had come after it had been sung. It would not convey to her the meaning it had for him; it would tell her nothing. He wondered whether any part of her present illness had arisen from strain, or anxiety, or vexation at the time of his departure. He remembered with a shudder the fierce, pitiless words he had said to her; he remembered how she had almost fallen, as if some one had struck her a physical blow; he remembered, too, what a little slender thing she was, with a pale face and a habit of being very tired with nothing in particular; and a wild uneasiness seized him. What would he not give to assure her that all was forgiven—if she would only get well and look once again like the Lucy Barraclough of

old days—yes, if she would only be happy even though he had lost her and another man had won her, and she had been feeble and false and treacherous !

Here he was at the hotel. He entered it and, instead of getting into the elevator and going either to his own room or to that which Felix and he used as a kind of office and reception-room for business purposes, he turned towards the staircase and began slowly and abstractedly to ascend it. He was lost to everything except the thoughts which the hearing of Felix's song had awakened. It was, therefore, perhaps not remarkable that he should stray from the direct way and, instead of turning on a landing and pursuing the grand staircase, go straight before him up a flight of narrower stairs which should have been shut off by a door that some careless person had left open.

It was only when he had reached the top of these stairs, and found himself standing on a landing with which he was totally unacquainted, that he came to a pause. It was the unfamiliarity of the place which brought him to himself—the fact that he had almost run against a wall where he had expected to find free passage. He stood still and began to look about him, realizing that he had made a mistake and got into a part of the building to him unknown. As a matter of fact, he had penetrated to what was known as “the private wing” of the hotel—a small annexe containing several suites of rooms held in much favour by such residents as loved quietness and retirement. He had not known of its existence, but, as he stood now, thinking of retracing his steps, he noticed how very quiet it was. The carpets were thick and soft; one got the

impression of double doors softly swinging on noiseless hinges; not a sound was to be heard of the bustle and traffic outside, which had seemed to penetrate to every other part of the hotel.

At last it occurred to Brian, in his half-awake state, to look for the staircase up which he had come, and to go down it again. He turned to do so, and was not far from it when two women, who had been slowly climbing it, gained the landing and paused. The younger and slighter of them leaned heavily on her companion, and laid her hand on her heart, panting as though breathless or oppressed. Brian's breath seemed to fail him, and his heart stood still. It was Lucy—his love Lucy. Hundreds of times a day, since he knew of her presence here, he had dreamed of meeting her—longed for it, dreaded it, tormented himself by thinking

of it ; and here, face to face with her, he was !

He moved slowly forward, looking at her, and she, opening her eyes at last, for she had closed them in her breathlessness, beheld him. Her limp and unstrung attitude, drooping, broken, and languid, seemed slowly to stiffen into rigidity as she looked at him.

“ Lucy ! ” he said, in an imploring whisper, as he stretched out his hands towards her—“ Lucy, I knew you were here. You are ill, they tell me. I’m so unhappy to think you should be ill or grieving. Don’t fret for anything that has ever been between us. I’m sorry I ever spoke so harshly to you as I did. I’ve repented it many a time, and wished to tell you so.”

“ Sir ! ” exclaimed the nurse, “ I don’t know who you are, but this lady is very

ill, and must not be startled. It's as much——” She checked herself in time from saying, “as her life is worth ;” but she both looked and was frightened and annoyed. Both her master and the doctor had so impressed upon her the danger of any shock to Lucy, that she was in continual anxiety on the subject. “ Ah ! ” she exclaimed in a loud voice, as Lucy swayed unsteadily, and she caught her, and held her up. “ Oh, she's fainted,” she added sharply to Brian. “ You don't know what you are doing, startling her in that way.”

“ Where is her room ? ” he asked, springing forward and catching Lucy in his arms, wishing at the moment that the room might be miles away.

“ This way—quick ! ” said the nurse, going rapidly before him. “ Bring her in, and lay her down, and then go away, or

there will be a pretty to-do when Mr. Law comes in."

It was a bedroom into which she had called him.

"Lay her on the bed," said she. "Oh dear, oh dear! now we shall have her ill and crying again for a week or more when she comes out of this. There, I can undress her here. Now, please go at once, sir. I know exactly what to do."

But Brian did not go. He laid the motionless figure on the bed, and did not move, even when the nurse came with her remedies. Scolding and grumbling, she went round to the other side of the bed, and was about to unfasten the hood which Lucy wore, when Brian lifted his hand to stop her. He was gazing down into Lucy's face, and he said in a low, steady, but thrilling voice, as if speaking to himself—

"Don't tease her with any of those

things. She'll never want them any more. She is dead."

" Don't say such things !" said the nurse, in angry perturbation, " but go, and let me attend to her."

" She is dead," repeated Brian, with a deep, heart-breaking sob, which seemed to rend his very heart. " Oh, Lucy, how glad I am that you heard what I said. How glad I am ! Forgive me—forgive me what I ever said to you !"

He kissed her forehead so lightly that scarce could it be called a kiss, slipped upon his knees by the bedside, laid one hand upon hers, and was silent. In that moment, nothing in the world existed for him, save only her.

The nurse began to cry. Such a scene was without precedent in her experience. She lived and acted by rule, and knew not what to do in the emergency.

Suddenly another voice asked—

“What is all this? Is my wife ill?
What——”

Brian got up, turned swiftly, and discovered himself to Law, who, though he neither started nor shrank, for his nerves were of steel, nevertheless showed a great change of countenance.

“Holgate!” he said, hardly above a whisper; and then, “What are you doing here?”

“Saying good-bye,” replied Brian, in a quiet, low voice. “I met her just now on the stairs; and when I spoke to her she fainted. I carried her in here. You asked if she was ill; she’ll never be ill any more.”

“I told the gentleman it was as much as——” began the nurse, sobbing.

“Hush!” said Brian. “Richard Law, I did not know *how* ill she was. I only knew she was ill. You may tell me I’ve

killed her. I can't say no. I shall never know whether I am sorry either ; for I shall never know whether she would be the happier, living or dead. That's in God's hands. If I had known, I would not have spoken to her, I think. I shall be here yet a while, if you have anything to say to me."

He paused. Law maintained his composure, though he had gone very white, and his hands clenched themselves. He looked aside, almost stealthily, at the bed on which Lucy lay. Brian, his eyes still fixed upon him, moved aside, as if to make room for him to go nearer, but he did not.

" You see," said the young man, after a silence, and in an unnatural, exultant kind of voice—" you see her, and you see me. You laid a trap to get everything from me—my money, my house, my wife—all that made life worth anything to

me, and you succeeded ; you got all you wanted. I hope you are satisfied."

He turned and went out of the room, leaving them there. He found his way again to the busier part of the hotel, and as he went he began to understand more clearly the meaning of what had happened. He felt as if the roof and walls would stifle him, and he went out of the house, into the street, and walked on and on and on, he knew not whither, communing with himself in a strange, excited frame of mind, which was not grief, nor exultation, nor despair, but which perhaps partook of them all. He knew not what the hour was when at last he began to feel a sense of bodily fatigue, and discovered that he was in some quiet suburb, with rows of neat-looking houses on either side, and rather dim lamps burning at considerable distances from one

another. As most of these houses were perfectly dark and perfectly quiet, he concluded that the night was advanced. At last a belated “ horse-car ” came jingling down the road. It was bound for the town. He got into it, and, crouched in a corner, felt almost dead with exhaustion, mental and bodily.

When at last he reached the hotel, he found it also quiet, and no one but the night porter about. He got to his room, and at last slept the sleep of one who is worn out. Henceforth for him life would contain nothing very agitating. Lucy was dead, and his story was told.

CHAPTER VII.

INES WRITES.

I PASS over the weeks which flew by with such rapidity after we had left our Virginian paradise, till we found ourselves established for a while in Philadelphia. It would not be particularly interesting to give full particulars of a tour through all the best known parts of northern and eastern America ; nor would an account of my varying states of mind, my griefs and my joys, my pains and my pleasures, be much more edifying. It is enough to say that, when we arrived at Philadelphia, things were, apparently, much as they had been when we left Front Royal, after my

explanation to Felix and my letter to Maurice. I had received no answer from the latter. I knew not whether he intended to accept or to ignore my decision. Despite Felix's command that I should forget troubles and give myself up to amusement and enjoyment, I could not always do so. One's feelings are apt to be unruly, however strong the curb which may restrain them outwardly. There were times when my enjoyment was keen and high; there were other times when my heart ached so cruelly that I longed to get away from all this, and once more be quietly secluded at Madame Prénat's. Oftentimes it was hard work, this rushing about, sight-seeing, and "enjoying," with an anxious mind and a preoccupied heart. Elisabeth's kindness never failed me. Felix was kind, too, but in spite of all my struggles not to entertain what I

considered ungenerous feelings, I could not help noticing how entirely he treated me as Elisabeth's friend and *protégée*. It was all right; it relieved us all of a vast amount of embarrassment, but it made me more than ever determined to have some clear understanding about the future. It had been settled that, after his engagement at Philadelphia, he was to sing in Washington for a week, then to go once more to New York, fulfil rather a long engagement there, and, about the middle of January, return to England. This was spoken of as decided, and, as I sat listening to him at that afternoon concert, while he sang the lovely "Greisenge-sang," I resolved that I would, that night, get myself excused from attending a grand reception to which we were bidden, and write a long letter to Professor Willoughby, in which I could joyfully tell

him that all was now settled and that I hoped to be able to resume work with him by the beginning of February.

We returned from the concert. Felix, not finding Brian Holgate in his private room, sent to inquire about him and say that he wanted him. But he was not to be found; only a waiter had some idea that he had seen the gentleman go out about half-past six. He had left no message and was not in his own room.

“Odd!” said Felix as we went down into the dining-room. “He is usually so punctilious. I can manage, I dare say, without him.”

We dined, and returned to our sitting-room. Elisabeth was somewhat opposed to my remaining behind.

“Oh, a truce to your musty old Professor!” she cried, when she heard my reason. “Let him wait. You want to

tell him about some negro words? If he thinks a lifetime but a bagatelle to give to the study of Sanskrit alone, what can he want with such frivolities as nigger dialect?"

"Let her write to him if she likes," said Felix, unexpectedly coming to my assistance.

Elisabeth had again begun, "Oh, but——" when I saw him look at her, raising his eyebrows slightly, whereupon she became silent, with a half-smile, half-frown, and presently observed—

"Well, I shall have to go with you and my father. Perhaps it is best, after all. There will be nothing to distract attention from my new Worth gown; the folk will have to use all the force of their intellects to grasp the fact that there can be such a thing as an Englishwoman well-dressed. Come along."

In a few minutes they had all left the room. I was glad that I was to be allowed to do as I wished. I heard their steps down the passage, and their voices for a minute or two, then there was silence. Our sitting-room was in a rather quiet part of the hotel. As I at last sat down at the table with my writing materials, one interruption, and one only, occurred: I heard the voice of Mrs. van Bibber, the young Virginian lady whose acquaintance we had made at Front Royal and who was wintering in this same hotel, uplifted, as she went along the hall, calling upon her mercurial son, Dubois—

“Dubois, Dubois, Boisey! *O* Boisey!”

No reply. The voice wandered further away. I smiled to myself. Dubois was probably not so far away as his unsuspecting mother imagined. I took up my pen, but did not at once begin to write. I

could have sat there, dreaming, the whole evening—dreams of mingled sweetness and bitterness; but of late I had very much discouraged myself from any such waste of time. Waste of time it was for me, I knew, and nothing else. Those who have to face life, and work, work, work, must not dream at first. When all is over, when the battle has been fought and won—or lost—then is the time for dreams, sad or glad. I had been vigorously inculcating this truism on my own mind, and at last I bent in earnest over the paper, beginning, “Dear Professor Willoughby.” Then another pause. What did Felix mean by raising his eyebrows and looking, half under his eyelids, at Elisabeth? What did she mean by so suddenly giving up her point? Probably it meant that he wished a word with her in private, and that in the comparative

shelter of the crowded reception he hoped to get it. Yes ; and my not being there would make the opportunity more easy to secure. I did not feel any resentment at this idea. It seemed to me the most natural thing in the world, but my heart ached, as it often had ached lately, and with an almost savage feeling I wished myself away, out of it all, and at peace. Let them keep their beautiful friendship ! A beautiful friendship it was, and always had been ; enough to dignify and ennoble the lives of both, since they did not choose to cement a closer union. They had a right to it ; I hoped they would live in it for years. But that did not prevent me from feeling as if I could not bear to stand by and see it all. I loved them both—adored them, almost—that I would have confessed ; but I must have had a very bad, vicious disposition. Of late it had

been unbearable to me to see them together, and to feel how united, how brave and happy they were, while I must, from the very nature of things, remain outside in the cold.

Stung by these thoughts, and calling pride and self-control to my aid, which things were always a good deal assisted by the *arrière pensée*, "it won't last very much longer now," I pushed my hair back, and began to write in earnest; and after a time, I found that though not profoundly interested in what I was saying, still I had a good many subjects to discuss, and was able to give some attention to them. Lying beside me on the table was a Zend grammar, to which I had been trying to give a little attention for some time past. I would make a list of knotty points which I wanted explained. How interesting! I would, in short, do anything

which should pass the time, employ my hands and my head, and save me from falling into one of those everlasting dreams, reveries, or broodings, which always now persisted in overtaking me whenever I was idle, and the enervating effect of whose treacherous sweetness I had grown greatly to dread. I thought, holding my pen suspended, I could tell the Professor that it was quite settled we should return in January; that I was not going to be married; that I was free, and should be at liberty when I returned to England to undertake for him without fear of interruption any work that he wished me to do.

Again I was smiling, a little bitterly, as I thought these thoughts. At the same moment I heard a step outside. The door-handle was turned. I sat still, staring in utter surprise at Felix, who came into the room, looking at me with an expression

I could not quite understand. At last I asked—

“Have you come away from the party?”

“No,” he said, coming up to me and standing beside me, “I have not. I never went.”

“Never went? Not when you went out with Elisabeth and Mr. Reichardt?”

“No,” he said, rather impatiently; “not when I went out with Elisabeth and Mr. Reichardt. How frightfully matter of fact you are.”

I was silent. My theory of his wishing to have an interview with Elisabeth was thus shattered to pieces. Then I became conscious that he was still looking at me. Then I was aware of a rapid beating of my heart, and of a wonder and a bewilderment as he went on, in his deep soft voice, and with his rather slow intonation, for

Felix, while never behindhand, was never in a hurry—

“ I fully intended going. I don't know what they will think of me. The only chance of escape was the fact that as the party was not given expressly on my account, I could stay away without exciting deadly passions. Yes, I meant to go ; but when I found that you were not going, that suited me better still, and I stayed.”

In this speech there were certainly several robust, full-blown contradictions and inconsistencies, which occurred to me afterwards. All I found to say in reply to it at that moment was, in a hesitating and embarrassed manner—

“ What have I to do with it ? ”

“ Ah, I knew you would ask that,” he said, smiling.

And I began to wonder what had happened to him ; but, all the time, that

strange, excited beating of my heart never stopped. As for Felix, whatever he may have felt, he was not the man to lose his head and look foolish. He saw my expression of wonder, and began to laugh a little.

“You look surprised. I expect you will be still more so, and will think me an absolute maniac, when I tell you that we have never finished that conversation we had a few months ago, soon after you came. You may have forgotten all about it”—[“No!” I murmured, under my breath. I knew what he meant. I had not forgotten a word of it.]—“but I have not. I have been such a slave to this touring about and party giving, and the ‘show business’ in general, that I have never been able to call an hour my own. To-night I resolved to break my bonds, and finish the discussion, if you will,” he

added in a gentle tone, which caused something to catch unpleasantly in my throat.

“I—but we settled everything then. You—oh, you surely did send that letter to Maurice!” I cried, a sudden apprehension seizing me.

“Oh yes, I sent the letter to Maurice. And I had one from him, thanking me for my—intercession for him.”

“You did not tell me that.”

“Why should I have told you? Are you not satisfied with the pain the poor fellow has had?”

I merely looked at him. I was angry.

“I beg your pardon. Do not scorch me out of existence altogether. Let us proceed. I sent him the letter. And I beg you will observe how honourably I am behaving even now. I gave you, in my own mind, an hour in which to write your

letter, and I have been patiently sitting in my business-room, without anything to do except read a Seaside Library novel, pirated from England, and wait. And here you are at it yet. You must have been 'talking a blue streak' on all those sheets of paper. I would give something to know what you can possibly have to say to that most excellent but most knotty and crabbed of *savants*."

"There is what I have said to him," said I. "You can read it all if you like."

He glanced at one of the sheets and shook his head, smiling as he drew a chair to the side of the table and placed himself in it. There was a lamp on this table. It was just behind him, and shone straight upon my face.

"No, no! Such small writing, and so much of it, with all those curious little characters interspersed. It is no doubt

very interesting to you and to him, but quite above my head, as I have often told you before."

I said nothing. Formerly I had always contradicted this statement aloud; but formerly I had done many things which I now did no more.

"I have often observed," he went on, "that if one can do one thing well and be not a complete fool in other respects, one gets a reputation for being clever all round. I have such a reputation amongst some of my friends, but fortunately I know my true worth, or worthlessness, better than they do."

"I have heard that you know a great deal more than you pretend, about some things," said I, not looking at him. "French history, in——"

"Oh, don't let us be personal!" he said, quickly interrupting me. "Seriously, I

should like to have a talk with you, if you will permit it. Do you object?"

"Certainly not," I replied, once more frozen by his assumption of the grown-up tone towards me—ceremonious and dignified. It might have been natural enough if I had been a stranger, but it always embarrassed me seriously when I reflected upon our real relations. For, with a deep-seated instinct, I knew that only so long as in his eyes I was a child could I tolerate those relations at all.

"Well, have you any idea how much you have changed, since we parted after the festival at Kirkfence?"

"You said so, when we first met."

"And don't you feel it yourself?"

"Yes. I was a child then; now I am—a grown-up person."

"And which would you rather be? which do you enjoy the most?"

"Each state has its advantages," I said oracularly.

"That night at Baltimore," he went on, "how you startled me! I can't describe it. I went into the room, and saw no one at first. Then I perceived a wild buzzing of mosquitoes, and then I saw the person who had recklessly let them in, with her back towards me, leaning out of the window. I recognized the way in which you do your hair—you haven't changed that—and the shape of your neck and shoulder, and I said joyfully to myself, 'Oh, here is Ines!' and I put my hand on your shoulder quite naturally, didn't I?"

"It was done not unnaturally, so far as I know," I said, with rather a nervous laugh, wondering why he would go into all these—to me—embarrassing details.

"I expected—for one forgets how people can change, at your age, and I had led

a busy life since I crossed the Atlantic—I expected to see my little girl turn and look at me, and instead of that——”

I looked at him inquiringly. I was really curious to know what he had seen, or thought he had seen, instead of his little girl.

“I was confronted by a stately, and I may say, haughty-looking young lady—so different, so utterly different. I felt as if I had committed an unpardonable freedom in touching you. I give you my word, I was never more abashed in my life. So self-possessed, you were; so still, and pale, and proud-looking! Your eyes, your expression—everything about you, was so altered. I did not know what to say to you. I told Lisa so, afterwards. She said it was exactly what she had expected to hear.”

He ceased, and then I knew that he had

been speaking much more rapidly than usual, and with something like vehemence, though in a low voice. "Still, and pale, and proud," seemed to ring in my ears, as I aimlessly turned over the leaves of my book. What extraordinary language to address to me! Was it a reproach? What was I to say?

"And so grave," he went on. "Since then I have learnt that the pride was only skin-deep—at least to me; and I am grateful. It was crushing at first."

"I think it is cruel of you to say that to me," I said, in great agitation. "As if—I proud—and to you!" I could hardly restrain my tears, and my voice shook.

"I don't mean that it was at all what one calls 'nasty pride,'" he went on, and I thought I heard a laugh in his voice. "It is only a part of yourself, and when I had got over the first shock of it, I rather

liked it. But the gravity—are you always grave now ? ”

“ I don’t know that I am particularly grave.”

“ But you are. You are very grave. And I think you feel very grave sometimes, don’t you ? ”

“ Surely every one must, who has begun to think, and understand things.”

“ Think, and understand things ! I wonder what that means ? We are now coming to what I wished to talk about. What have you thought about, what do you understand, that should give you that almost melancholy gravity ? ”

“ I’m sorry if I am so depressing.”

“ I never said you were depressing. I perceive you can be malicious. What a reproachful look ! Indeed, I am not jesting with you. May I tell you what I think you mean ? ”

“Oh yes.”

“As you say, you have passed from a child—or almost a child—into a woman, and you have had to begin to think about things. Maurice made you think about things, didn't he?”

I tried to nod my head. I could not speak. But I planted my elbows firmly on the table and shielded my face with my left hand, feeling desperate. What had prompted him to come and put me through a catechism like this? It was horrible. I wished that the others would return before their time, or that “Boisey” would, as was his wont sometimes, burst into the room, clatter madly round it, and go out again—that anything would happen which should give me an excuse for moving away from the scrutiny under which I felt myself sitting. But nothing did happen, and Felix went on, unperturbed.

“Yes, just as I thought! You need not cover up your face in that way. That story with Maurice is over and done. Still, it made you think about things, as you admit. As for understanding them, I want to get to the bottom of that idea, too. When you found that Lisa spoke favourably of this marriage, and when you found that I, without asking you anything about it, gave my consent—I speak as a monitor and guardian—then you thought you understood that your oldest friend, Ines—your oldest friend, who has never had one thought towards you but of kindness—wanted, to use your own harsh expression, to ‘get rid of you’?—that was what in your wisdom you understood, was it not?”

I had nothing to say, not a word.

“You could credit the idea, and give it house-room, though you had promised to

trust him, and had sworn you did trust him—that after he had cared for you and been fond of you and proud of you for twelve years, he could then, suddenly and without a cause, feel sick and tired of you, and eagerly seize upon the first opportunity—decent—that offered, to relieve himself of the burden which you had become to him.”

“You are cruel!” I said, suddenly uncovering my face, which I felt to be burning hot, and looking at him with passionate remonstrance. “You can put it all in that way, and it sounds very well, and there is something in it, too. I have never been worthy of anything you have done for me. Perhaps I knew that; but you can’t see; you don’t see. You say I am no longer a child—oh, cannot you understand that a child may take things from a man which no woman who is not helpless may, unless he is her—relation, of

some sort? Oh," I went on, shaking from head to foot in my emotion, "I think I shall die if you talk to me in this way, telling me I am grown-up, and then rebuking me for not going on as if I were still a baby. What have I done? What have I done? Proud! It would become me to be proud! I can't bear it!"

"Ines!"

I looked at him for a moment, wildly if my looks were like my feelings. I saw that he was very grave, his lips set, his eyes searching me with a new and unknown expression. I could not read it all, but it seemed to me as if there was something like exultation in it. And, starting aside from the subject we had been discussing, he suddenly said, in a low voice which caused me to tremble with another feeling,—

"If you had accepted Maurice, I should have *hated* you."

I drew a long breath. And, almost without a pause, he went on—

“We shall get to the truth by degrees. So you had all these unspeakable feelings and, without saying a word to me, you went and made arrangements with the Professor. May his shadow never be less, and after his death may he have a marble tomb covered with inscriptions from the Rig-Veda, if that would give him any satisfaction! And you were going to be an independent young woman, as so many young women are nowadays—‘on your own hook,’ if you will excuse the fearful levity of the expression.”

“If I was, I—and the other young women—perhaps felt ourselves obliged to be so. Not all girls have fathers and mothers to look after them.”

“I meant no unkindness to you—or to the other young women. Whenever I see

a woman walking alone and honestly through the world, I feel inclined to stand aside and take off my hat to her as she goes by. But you will own that this was what you purposed ? ”

“ Yes, it was.”

“ And you did not take into consideration what I might say or wish ? ”

I hung my head. I was convinced that he knew perfectly well what my motives had been, and was taking advantage of me. But I could not prevent it.

“ You did not. Did Lisa tell you that I had a long talk with her about you, and that she upheld your course ? ”

“ She did approve ? Thank God ! No, she did not tell me.”

“ She told me I might manage this affair for myself. Lisa was very hard upon me—very. I may say, brutal.”

“ Was she ? ”

“ Yes, she was. Ines ! ”

Again I looked up and met his eyes, and realized that that proud reticence and self-command of which I had felt so secure, and which I had promised myself should never fail me, in relation to him, hardly depended on myself alone. I clasped my hands under my chin, fixed my eyes upon the grammar which lay open before me, and said to myself—

“ If you do fail, and degrade and make a fool of yourself now, you will deserve a whipping ; and in some shape or other you shall have it. A fitting reward for his goodness to you, to let him see what your self-love and self-indulgence have led you to—drivelling sentimentality. How he would hate any girl to make an ass of herself about him in this way ; and you—unprovoked and outrageously to do thus ! No ; if you give way now, you shall never know again what self-respect is ! ”

After this fearful tumult in my own mind, his words seemed to come cool and quiet, as he said—

“I think we are getting to the end of our explanation now. You had come to a crisis in your life. There were the usual ‘three courses’ open to you. The first was to marry your cousin—you declined. The second was, since you would have some change, to go to Professor Willoughby, as you purposed, and have the proud consciousness of being independent and—happy, we’ll hope. Do you think you would have been happy?”

I shook my head speechlessly.

“The third—I would have told you before of the third, only you have repelled me so by your steady, consistent coldness, ever since we met. You shake your head. Ah, but it is true. You have been ice to me and, like a fool, I have loved you the

better for it. Ines, do not be so hard—look at me. I ask you only to look at me!”

I wondered dimly what people looked like who really felt hard, if I was considered to look hard now. But I raised my eyes to his face, and looked at him without flinching.

“Do you not think,” he said, with slow distinctness, “that you could make up your mind to let that excellent scholar find another secretary, and you——”

“And I?” I said somehow. “Tell me what you *wish* me to do. You have never told me that yet.”

“And you stay with me—always.”

“Stay with——” I began.

“Don’t look at me like that!” he exclaimed, almost angrily. “Don’t look down at me as if I had said something beyond description insulting to you! Am I so utterly repulsive to you?” (His

voice suddenly changed, and I sat as if transfixed.) “You have been dear to me for twelve long years, but now—this time only, I know what you will always be to me.” A pause. “You look at me as if you would crush me, but you shall not; you must hear it now. Listen! I believe you *will* not believe me.”

He rose suddenly, stooped over me as I sat at the end of the table, and in a low but distinct voice spoke some sentences to me in words which, as I listened to them, swept away every chance of misconception, doubt, or misunderstanding; which burnt into my heart and left me face to face with the truth. As these words reached my consciousness, my eyes saw no more the books or the papers, or any of the objects around me—nothing but a white blank, and my pulses stood still.

He ceased, and there was a little silence.

Then I knew that he laid a hand upon mine, and said—

“Now, I have told you. And you?”

Again there was a silent pause, till he asked, in a voice that strove to be steady—

“You heard what I said?”

“Yes,” I whispered.

“Speak to me, then. Don’t go on torturing me. Can’t you tell me the same thing, now, or—some time?”

With a deep sigh I lifted up his hand, and pressed my cheek upon it.

“Ines, how long will you keep me waiting?”

“You know it,” I said; and it cost me agony to make the avowal, though I knew all that I had gained, and was resolved to speak the truth. “It cannot be that you do not know it. You say I have been torturing you. It was because I feared I was telling you what you want to know,

every time I looked at you or spoke to you."

"And you hate to admit it? How like you. But you do admit it? Ines, I'll never doubt it or you, as long as I live."

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM MOOR ISLES.

ON another October night, years and years after these things had happened had passed and gone, and had become almost as a tale that is told, the south-west wind was again rioting across hill and dale, was rushing with wild strength up the slopes of Ravenside Hill, and striking the summit of it, much as it had done at a later hour that night on which Brian Holgate had returned home at midnight from the Irkford concert.

On this occasion the darkness of midnight was not over the scene; the hour, indeed, was comparatively early, between nine and ten in the evening. There was

in the sky a pallid moon, which sometimes gleamed forth for a few minutes when the rack parted and allowed it to show. It shone fitfully upon the walls and roof of Moor Isles, and showed the gate leading to the door of the farm. Save the roar of the wind, there was no sound to disturb the quietness of the night. In the great kitchen of the farm, there were the glowing red remains of what had been a large hot fire. At some little distance from it, out of the shadow of the ingle, sat Alice Ormerod beside a little round table with a lamp on it. A book was in her hand, and she had been quietly reading for some time.

The lamp, though bright enough just beside her, did not penetrate far into the gloom of the immense kitchen. Deep cavernous recesses were filled with black shadows. Here and there the light caught

one of the great beams of the ceiling, but the general effect was that of spacious darkness, illumined by the one small lamp and the red glow from the fire.

Alice has not altered much during the seven or eight years which have passed since you saw her. Her beauty is of the kind that wears well, and also she has a strong soul with which to resist the ravages of grief and time. There is a look of stately, well-to-do repose about her just now; perhaps her present occupation best shows the difference between what she was and what she has become. Seven years ago she would not have sat for more than an hour engrossed in a book. Her face, though undoubtedly grave and more set, is very little altered; the fashion of her hair, the simple style of her plain black gown, are all just as they used to be.

As a louder gust of wind rushed wildly

past the windows, it seemed to rouse her. Her book drooped a little backwards. She raised her head and listened.

“It’s a wild night,” she thought, “and getting on for half-past nine. I must go and see if that lad has all he wants before he goes to sleep.”

At that moment, her attention became suddenly fixed and absorbed. Her eyes dilated. She laid her book upon the table, and sat, wide-eyed, gazing into the darkness and listening.

A low knocking was audible at the door, and then both the dogs in the yard began to bark loudly. Ferran, now well-advanced into middle life, who had been lying at her feet, pricked up his ears, and began to growl angrily.

“What’s it all about?” she half-muttered to herself, and then rose and went to the door.

She was discreet and cautious, but not nervous for an instant. It was not often that an unknown hand knocked at their door at that hour. The said door was secured by a chain as well as by a great bolt. The latter she undid, and, leaving the chain on, opened the heavy old oaken door and, drawing it back as far as the chain would allow, asked—

“Who’s there?”

She saw indistinctly a man’s figure in the darkness, and there was a slight pause before the visitor said a single word—

“Alice!”

As she heard it, her heart sprang to her throat. With eager, trembling hands she began to undo the chain, and simultaneously Ferran set up a wild whimpering, scratching and crying. At last, in about two seconds, which seemed to her an eternity, the door was flung as wide as it could

go, the wayfarer's hand was seized in both hers ; he was drawn into the house ; Ferran, with a shriek of delight and recognition, sprang upon him, and Alice spoke in a voice almost choked with feeling—

“ Brian, Brian, you have come home to us ! ”

Then he was inside, in the warmth and the shelter ; the door closed between him and the storm. She had led, or pushed, or dragged him within the effluence of the lamp's rays ; she was holding his hand still, and looking, looking, without the power of uttering another word, with a strange, excited emotion that made her whole frame feel weak and feeble, but filled her heart with strength and gladness.

He who had gone away a broken-hearted boy, now stands confronting her—a tall, upgrown man, whose shoulders are

broad, whose strength is great, whose once smooth face, though still shaven, is hollowed with the lines and inequalities of maturity, whose fair skin is bronzed and roughened, and whose blue eyes, looking out of his much-changed countenance with startling effect, are the only things about him which have remained the same. They seem to Alice like ghosts.

“So you knew me again—you remembered my voice?” he said, in deep soft tones. “It’s more than ever I deserved. And this poor old fellow, too. Ferran, old lad, I do believe thou’rt glad to see me.”

“Did you ever doubt that we should be glad to see you?” she asked. She had seated herself now and, though her heart was still wildly beating, she had managed to draw a veil of composure over her face. It was only her eyes which could not conceal their delight. She scanned him

from head to foot. He looked strong, healthy, prosperous. There was no sign of poverty or distress about him. What had made him choose this hour for coming?

“I should never have doubted, Alice, if I’d ever allowed myself to think about it at all. But I never did, till a few months ago; and then so many little things happened, one after another, making it plain that it was best for me to come across and get them settled, that I made up my mind to face it—and here I am.”

“And where do you come from?” she asked quickly. “Sit you down there and tell me.” She seized another log and threw it upon the fire, which quickly blazed up with brilliance.

He named a rich young giant city of far-western America.

“And do you live there now? That’s in——” She named the state.

“I’ve lived there for five years now, and I suppose I shall go back and stay there till I die. I seemed to hit on a way of earning my living, somehow. It was hard work that I wanted. It settles you down, does a bit of hard work. When I first got there, it was two years after she” (in a whisper) “died. You heard about that, Alice?”

“Yes. Mrs. Reichardt told me.”

“At the end of those two years, Alice, I seemed to feel as badly as I had done at the beginning of them. They had been so kind to me. Mr. Arkwright—I’ll never forget his goodness—he never spoke an impatient word to me all that time that I was so dazed and helpless, though he had all my work to do, and he’d just got engaged to Miss Grey, and must have wished me at Jericho many a time.”

“He was happy,” said Alice, quietly:

"It would have been a shame if he couldn't have dealt gently by one in sorrow."

"He did deal gently by me, anyhow. As for Mrs. Reichardt——" He paused. There was a catch in his voice.

Alice nodded. "Ay, I know."

"I felt as if I was a curse to myself and every one else. I couldn't think of any one who was the happier or the better for knowing me, but nearly every one was the worse, in some way or other. I stopped with them till they left America. I promised Mrs. Reichardt to write to her, but I broke my word. I'd nothing good to tell her. It would have been easy many a time to make away with myself while I was wandering up and down, and for no one to be the wiser. Perhaps," he added, with a smile at once sad and shrewd, "that was why I didn't do it."

“And how did you come to feel better, then?” she asked eagerly. “But you’ve come to stay, haven’t you, Brian? Why don’t you take off your coat? I can have father’s room ready for you in ten minutes. Oh, Brian, father is dead! Dear old father! Did you know?”

“Dead! Nay, I knew nothing. I want to know all. But I can’t stay, Alice. I’m bound to go away from here again to-night. It’s a sort of forbidden luxury, this visit. I meant to be hard and strong, and not come; but I gave way in the end. I felt as if I must travel over the old road once again, and have a look at the old place. It will be my last. Dead! He was always so kind to me, was your father. Are you in black for him now? Is it only a short time ago?”

“It is three years ago now. He died quite suddenly and quietly. He’d said to

me many a time when we used to walk home from church together, ‘Ailsy, I’ve often wondered why they say in the Prayer-book, “From battle, murder, and *sudden death*,” like as if they were one as bad as the other.’ So he had his wish, and died quite suddenly. He left Andy and me so that we need not have gone on with the farm, but we couldn’t bear to leave it. We took it on. It’s something for him to think about and for me to do. It keeps us up many a time when we should be sad, but for that. But go on ; tell me more. How did you get to that city ? ”

“ I’ll tell you afterwards. I’m just thirsting to know one or two things. There’s Moor Isles, Alice ; does any one live at my old house ? ”

“ It’s your house yet, Brian, and always will be, thank God ! When Richard Law

came home from America, after—you know—he was quite quiet for a long time. No one ever heard him say that he had felt it much ; he isn't one to let on about his feelings, but some of us think he had, for all that. One day he came up here, and he said to Sarah Stott and me that he'd nothing more to do with it. It wasn't his, really ; we could see after it ourselves, as we were your friends, and as for him, he washed his hands of it. Well, we were thankful to get rid of him on any terms, and knowing that you and I could never quarrel over it, I took on myself to behave as if it was mine, Brian. What do you think of that ?”

“ I think it was just like your goodness. Well ?”

“ So I saw after it, and had it kept aired and tidy. And one day in the spring Mrs. Reichardt came up. She'd come

over from Irkford to see me and tell me everything she could about you, and others as well. Eh, but she is good ; such a kind heart she has, and she never hurts any one's feelings. She always seems to know what to say to you, and how to say it too. So she stayed all day, and we talked nearly the whole time ; and when she went away, I felt I'd found one that would never change to me. I told her everything that had happened to us. And it was after that a bit that I saw her again, and she proposed to me that, if I approved—she said she was sure you would if I did—she would rent Moor Isles from me, as your agent, like. I was glad. I knew you'd say yes to that, if you knew. And it's all right. There's all the accounts and everything quite correct. She said she had a great fancy for the place. She said she'd like to have me for a neighbour, and she

told me, too, that she wanted some such place, that it was a rest only to be in, not only for herself, but for Mr. and Mrs. Arkwright, whenever they wanted to come."

"They got married, then?" he asked, with a sad, half smile.

"Yes, directly after they got back to England. She's never tired of talking about them. She says they're the dearest things she has in the world, and I don't wonder she loves them."

"Ay, I could see what was going on there, in the midst of my own misery," said Brian, musingly. "I remember how Mr. Arkwright was a changed man from that very night of their landing—from the time he saw Miss Grey again. After they were engaged, Mrs. Reichardt told me how he'd always been in the habit of thinking her a mere child, with having adopted her from the time she was a baby, and when

he saw her again after two years, grown into such a stately and beautiful young woman, he—well, we all could see. I believe Miss Grey was the only one that didn't, till he made it plain to her. So they come here sometimes?"

"They come here often. At first they used to come alone, or with Mrs. Reichardt; and they come alone now sometimes, but very often they send their two little ones with their governess and maids, and I can tell you Mrs. Reichardt spends a deal of her time here then. Of course they live in London, but he doesn't sing as much as he used to do. He has a great deal to do about some school of singing; I never know what it is. Oh, but what I meant to say was, Mrs. Reichardt said she would keep all the old things in the house; there's not one gone, though there's some new ones come in. She said, if ever you

came back, it would be ready for you. She thought you would not object."

"Object!" he echoed. "It's the best bit of news I've heard this many a day—that there are good people and little children who come to my house and are happy there. I'll see Mrs. Reichardt about it. I have business in Irkford, and the least I can do is to go and apologize to her for not writing. There's only one thing to prevent me from offering it to her if she'd like to buy it, or take it on an endless lease, or something of that kind."

"And what's that?" she asked him. The fire was flickering; the light was uncertain; but it shone into her eyes as she looked at him, and it shone upon his face, lined and thoughtful, turned towards the blaze, as he leaned forward, his elbows on his knees.

"That some time or other my own little

child—my boy Brian, when he is grown up, might feel that I had done wrong to him in not giving him a chance of having it for his own. He knows that I have an old house in England, and that I was going to see it, and his mother, for all she is an American, never lets him forget that he has an English father.”

There was a pause, not so very long as to be noticeable. Then Alice said, in a voice scarcely altered from the one in which she had all along been speaking—

“Brian, you might think I knew by instinct everything that had happened to you all this time. Do you mean that you are married?”

“By George! Of course you couldn’t know. How stupid of me! Yes; and that was how I came to myself after that dreadful time. After I’d settled in this

business house at —, I met the sister of one of the other fellows there, Ferris, his name was. She was called Anne Ferris—Nannie, they always called her. I don't know how it came about exactly. I found she was as good as an angel to me. I think it was once when she went away for a time that I learnt how much she meant in my life. I told her everything that had happened—the whole story, and concealed nothing from her. I even told her about Lucy, and that there could never be any one the same to me as she had been, and I asked her, could she take me, knowing it all, and she consented. It was wonderful."

("Lucy was dead," was the thought concealed by Alice's half smile.)

"We have been married four years," he went on, "and that one boy is our only child. She is a good woman, if ever one lived."

Another pause.

"So many things happen when people have been parted for so long," she said.

"And are you happy?"

"I'm contented, when I don't think too much of what's past and gone. Yes, and sometimes I am happy, I think. And you see why it would not be right in me to part with Moor Isles altogether."

"Oh yes, I see. You are quite right," said Alice, almost in a whisper.

"And poor old Sally?" he asked.

"She lives between here and Moor Isles. She's getting very feeble, and past her work, but Mrs. Reichardt is very kind to her, and will never turn her away."

"She's an angel. But I'll see that she is not put to expense in the matter. I'll settle all that. I'm going to Irkford tomorrow. And Andy, Alice, where is he, and how?"

“He’s much the same. He gets no stronger. Sometimes he’s better, and sometimes he’s worse. To-day he has been very poorly, and in bed all day.”

She did not offer to take him to Andrew, nor did he ask to go.

“And you, Alice,” he said. “You look well. I hope you’re happy, as you deserve to be.”

“Oh, I’m well enough,” she said tranquilly. “I’ve been much happier since Mrs. Reichardt and her friends came up here. They’ve been so good to me—told me things, and lent me books, and we are friends—yes, they are real friends. You can always get on when you have friends.”

“I should have thought—I felt almost sure I should find you were married,” he said, with rather a sad smile.

“Why?” she asked deliberately. “Did

you ever hear of any one as I wanted to have?"

"No; but there must have been many who wanted to have you."

He paused. Whether some faint gleam of the truth was borne into his mind by the mere fact of their having spoken together on the subject, who shall say? He finished his sentence in a kind of embarrassment; but she replied, calmly and cheerfully—

"There have been some, Brian—one or two—poor things! But I never felt as if any one of them could tempt me away from this. You may believe me, I'm best as I am."

"I believe you speak the truth, as you always did," he said, rising. "I must go away now. I'm going to walk back into Hollowley. But first, Alice, come with me into the Moor Isles garden, that I

may look across, and feel the wind that comes blowing from those moors. It doesn't come off Ravenside to-night. I'm fain to stand in the old garden once again."

She rose. "Yes, I'll go with you. But listen, Brian. I've thought of some little things I could like to send to your wife and your little boy, if—did you tell her you once had a friend——"

"Oh, she knows all about you, Alice, and everything that you've done for me! *She* says—no, never mind what she says. But she does say you must be just lovely, and she sent her love to you."

"Very well. You can give mine to her. Tell her I'll give her a welcome when she ever comes to Moor Isles. You must leave me your address, and I'll send the things to you before you sail again. They'll like them, because they come from your old home. Now we can go out."

They went out, Alice casting a shawl over her head and shoulders. They passed out of the farmyard and into the Moor Isles garden. All was still. It was now half-past ten, and the servants had gone to bed. Softly she led the way to the bottom of the garden, and opened the gate which led into the great sloping pasture. They stood there, side by side, and the soft, delicious wind blew wildly about them. Then the clouds parted, and showed great swells of moorland sleeping dark under the stormy sky, with the nearer fields and uplands, and the lines of twinkling lights travelling up the hills in all directions from the town in the valley below.

“Oh,” he suddenly exclaimed, with a kind of passion in his choked voice,—“oh, God! it’s my home, Alice! it’s my home! I never knew till now what it meant to

me. I believe I love it better than wife or child, or anything living. I think I was a fool to come back to it." He dropped on to his knees on the ground, bent to the grassy embankment by which they were standing, pressed his face upon it, kissed the earth of it, and took some green leaves into his hand. But on rising, he threw them down, saying, "No, I won't carry so much as a blade of grass with me; it might witch me back again here. Come away!"

In a few minutes they stood together beside the farmhouse door.

"Good-bye, Alice. There's nothing else to say. I shall think of this night many a time, to the end of my life."

"You won't come in again?" she asked, pushing open the door.

"No, no."

They stood for a moment, holding each

other's hands fast, till he again said, in an unsteady voice—

“Good-bye.”

And she answered, in a sweet and steady tone, “Good-bye, Brian. I am glad you came. God bless you !”

THE END.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 045844161